

# **GULF COAST RECOVERY: FACING CHALLENGES AND COMING BACK STRONGER IN EDUCATION**

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## **HEARING**

BEFORE THE

### **COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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April 26, 2006

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## **GULF COAST RECOVERY: FACING CHALLENGES AND COMING BACK STRONGER IN EDUCATION**

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**Wednesday, April 26, 2006  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Education and the Workforce  
Washington, DC**

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The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:05 a.m., in room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Howard McKeon [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives McKeon, Petri, Castle, Johnson, Biggert, Platts, Tiberi, Kline, Inglis, Marchant, Price, Fortuno, Jindal, Boustany, Foxx, Drake, Kuhl, Brady, Miller, Kildeee, Owens, Payne, Scott, Woolsey, Tierney, Wu, Holt, Davis of California, McCollum, Bishop, and Jefferson.

Staff present: James Bergeron, Counselor to the Chairman; Amanda Farris, Professional Staff Member; Steve Forde, Communications Director; Kevin Frank, Coalitions Director for Workforce Policy; Ray Grangoff, Legislative Assistant; Richard Hoar, Professional Staff Member; Deborah L. Emerson Samantar, Committee Clerk/Intern Coordinator; Amanda Schaumburg, Education Policy Counsel; Rich Stombres, Assistant Director of Education and Human Resources Policy; Toyin Alli, Staff Assistant; Denise Forte, Legislative Associate/Education; Lauren Gibbs, Legislative Associate/Education; Lloyd Horwich, Legislative Associate/Education; Cheryl Johnson, Counsel, Education and Oversight; Tom Kiley, Communications Director; Ricardo Martinez, Legislative Associate/Education; Joe Novotny, Legislative Assistant/Education; Rachel Racusen, Press Assistant; and Mark Zuckerman, Staff Director/General Counsel.

Chairman McKEON [presiding]. A quorum being present, the Committee on Education and the Workforce will come to order.

We are holding this hearing today to hear testimony on Gulf Coast recovery, facing challenges and coming back stronger in education.

Under Committee Rule 12(b), opening statements are limited to the chairman and ranking minority member of the committee. Therefore, if other members have statements, they will be included in the record.

With that, I ask unanimous consent for the hearing record to remain open 14 days to allow members' statements and other extra-

neous material referenced during the hearing to be submitted in the official hearing record. Without objection, so ordered.

Good morning, and thank you all for joining us at this hearing, which will focus on the challenges faced and successes achieved by Gulf Coast schools in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to our panel of witnesses, who have traveled from their institutions in order to provide us their unique insights into what we have done well with regard to education in the Gulf Coast region, as well as what obstacles we still face.

I also extend a special welcome to our committee members from the Gulf Coast region, as well as those members whose congressional districts have opened their arms to families displaced from the areas hit hardest by the hurricanes. Our prayers remain with you and your neighbors.

Last year, the Gulf Coast endured one of the worst series of hurricanes in our nation's history. Students, workers, retirees and families from the region were impacted in ways seemingly incomprehensible before the storm struck. And the impact of the storms reached far beyond the Gulf Coast. Thousands of schools across the Nation opened their doors to displaced students, and scores of churches, charities and families did the same.

Looking back months later, it is no secret that there have been many bumps in the road. Difficulties have been well-documented, and constructive criticism has been appropriately delivered, all with the hope and the expectation that we have learned valuable lessons along the way. But, at the same time, we must be cautious not to concentrate solely on what went wrong after the hurricanes. Rather, we should balance those lessons with an understanding and an appreciation of what went right.

Before our committee today are men and women who have been key to the recovery process. They have seen firsthand on a daily basis some of what has gone wrong, but more importantly, they have been intimately involved in what has gone right.

There are some real success stories that have arisen from this terrible tragedy both in the Gulf Coast region and around the country. And it is my hope that we can learn from and be inspired by them. And I am hopeful we will hear some of those stories here today.

This committee has been active in driving legislation to provide resources to schools and families as quickly as possible. And likewise, we have been active in investigating why there occasionally may be obstacles as part of that process.

Last year, led by Mr. Jindal and Mr. Boustany, our committee pushed legislation to reimburse public, including charter and private schools that have enrolled displaced students to help those schools get the supplies and equipment to reopen their doors and to provide funds to assist institutions of higher education that have enrolled displaced students, as well as resources for institutions in Louisiana and Mississippi that were impacted by the hurricanes.

We also worked to expand opportunities for quality teachers to serve displaced students, to protect Federal student loan forgiveness for displaced teachers, to include funds for the Head Start Early Childhood Education Program, to defray the cost not covered

by Federal Emergency Management Agency, and to give displaced families easier access to child care services.

Now, as the academic year during which Katrina and Rita struck draws to a close, we have the opportunity and, indeed, the obligation to look back, learn from any shortcomings, and build upon our successes. That is a process I hope and expect will continue this morning at this hearing. And it is a process that this committee will remain committed to in the months and years ahead.

I also want to thank Mr. Castle, subcommittee chairman of the K-12 Select—what is the name of your subcommittee?

**Mr. CASTLE. Education Reform Subcommittee.**

Chairman McKEON. Yes, Education Reform Subcommittee. It took me 10 years to form the committee that I was subcommittee chairman of, and—anyway, he led a congressional trip down to the region. And I want to thank him for doing that and for the report that he has brought back to us.

I look forward to our discussion. I am eager to hear thoughts from our witnesses.

And with that, I yield to my good friend, Mr. Miller, for any opening statement that he may have.

[The opening statement of Chairman McKeon follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, Chairman,  
Committee on Education and the Workforce**

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displaced students, as well as resources for institutions in Louisiana and Mississippi that were impacted by the hurricanes.

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I look forward to our discussion, and I am eager to hear thoughts from our witnesses. And with that, I yield to my friend Mr. Miller for any opening statement he may have.

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**Mr. MILLER.** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I, too, want to welcome our witnesses here today.

I had an opportunity to visit with Father Maestri and Superintendent Voitier and President Cowen and President Hughes while I was in Louisiana last month. And thank you for taking time to come to Washington to update us.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, several of our members traveled to New Orleans and the surrounding areas last month to get a first-hand look at the damage, to meet with students, teachers, faculty and parents. The pictures we saw in the newspapers and on TV did not do justice to the severity of the crisis on the ground. Nothing prepared us for what we saw on our arrival to the New Orleans area.

Signs of devastation were everywhere even though it has been 7 months since the levees were breached. Houses were off their foundations, and in the middle of the streets, water marks that are over 10 feet high. There were abandoned cars, businesses and mold-plagued schools.

In some communities, we could clearly see that in spite of tremendous efforts by residents, the clean up has been slow and the recovery efforts challenged by government complacency. What we heard from residents was that they felt they had been abandoned by their government.

During our time with Superintendent Voitier, she shared with us how for 5 days after the storm hit, the first rescue team in St. Bernard Parish were from Canada. College students from SUNO talked to us about still not having a permanent place to live 7 months later and then coming to a campus that was completely created anew out of trailers and the hard work and the ingenuity of the leadership of that campus.

No person, no family or business was left untouched by the devastation of Katrina. We know how the White House and FEMA knew about Katrina's powers early on and failed to adequately plan for that. And we know how FEMA was hollowed out. Unfortunately, the price for that is now being paid by the people of the Gulf Coast and of the New Orleans area.

In fact, I think it was Father Maestri who told us in our visit that there were three disasters in New Orleans: There was Katrina, then there was Rita, and then there was FEMA.

And what we saw in our discussions with so many people was the inability of FEMA to be able to respond to the real crisis situa-

tion that they were presented by various colleges, by various schools so that they could get up and get running and have, in the case of colleges, have the classes available to them, be able to welcome an incoming class this fall—in the case of elementary schools, to provide space where families were starting to return, were wanting to send their children to school.

And we saw great creativity in the case of the SUNO and the case of Dillard with President Hughes with the Hilton Hotel. The "Dilton," I think, they are calling their college temporarily.

But we also then went out to the campus and witnessed the incredible devastation of that campus and saw the kinds of resources that are going to be necessary to get back on to campus—that is imperative.

And it is very clear that I think from all that we heard from the people we visited with, that the recovery of the educational institutions, both elementary and secondary, and the institutions of higher education are absolutely critical to the long-term recovery of the New Orleans area and of the Gulf Coast region. Not only are they the largest employer in the immediate area, but they are training the employees of the future.

They are creating the pipelines to the health care industry in the Gulf Coast region, to the educational establishments in the Gulf Coast region, to the tourism establishments in the Gulf Coast region. These are the institutions which are doing that.

And for families to be able to return, they have to have a place to send their children to school. For business to reopen, they have to know that the students are going to be there, that the colleges will be up and running, and that incoming class this fall will also be able to take advantage of the opportunity that these institutions have provided for so many students over so many years.

But what we were presented with was the fact that FEMA really was in the process of treating this as any other disaster, and this simply is not any other disaster.

And what we heard from college presidents and others was that, while they have been, I think, showing a great deal of ingenuity and taking a great deal of risk in terms of borrowing money, in some cases, against their endowment, in some cases, in the open market, in some cases, against their insurance, that they were not getting payment from FEMA, and so now they are running into a cash-flow problem, that they have gone forward with some of the rebuilding, some of the reconstruction. But if you were in the home building or in the commercial construction business, you would have progress payments.

But what we see is FEMA holding onto the dollar until every T is crossed and I is dotted, and therefore, they can only go so far on their own credit.

If FEMA wants to hold back 20 percent of the money at the end—and we can haggle over how it was done, whether it was done right, wrong or what—that would be one thing. But when they are withholding the money on the front end, and then you see how the progress and rebuilding can be determined.

I don't think this is necessarily a problem of the law, I think it is a matter of how FEMA is working.

We also heard from so many people that they constantly had to renew contact with FEMA because there was just a constant turnover of workers in the area. And you didn't have a continuity of a relationship in dealing with the people. And where people showed initiative, where people put the schools back in place, they now were suggested that they might be punished because they did it outside of FEMA's say, and yet they had no alternative if they were going to provide classrooms and education to those students so that members of the community could return to St. Bernard Parish.

And when you see what they have done with their ingenuity, with their courage, with their risk taking, you just wonder why we couldn't have been a better partner in that. But it is not over. It is not over. They have to go beyond the one school that is open. They need to open additional schools, and they need to open in a timely fashion.

We believe after our trip that this really should have been done within the Department of Education. The Department of Education deals with school construction, deals with technical assistance. It knows the people on the ground. They have a long-term relationship with many of these institutions. And they have other relationships with this institution that can be used in terms of guaranteeing that the work is done right, that it is done properly, and the taxpayer is protected.

So I look forward to the testimony from these individuals. They were very generous with their time when we were down there. They gave us a great deal of insight over those several days as to their problems. But I think they also clearly impressed upon us the critical need for the recovery of these institutions to the economy of New Orleans and to the Gulf states generally in terms of the critical role they play in preparing people for the future of that economy and, obviously, for families that need to have a place to send their children so they can come back and rebuild their homes, their communities, their businesses and the region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, very much for having this hearing.  
[The prepared statement of Mr. Miller follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. George Miller, Ranking Minority Member,  
House Committee on Education and the Workforce**

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I, too, want to welcome the witnesses here today. I had the opportunity to visit with Father Maestri, Superintendent Voitier, President Cowan and President Hughes while I was in Louisiana last month. Thank you for taking the time to come to Washington and update us on the recovery efforts.

Mr. Chairman, as you know several of our members traveled to New Orleans and surrounding areas last month to get a first hand look at the damage and to meet with students, teachers, faculty and parents. The pictures we see in newspapers and on TV do not do justice to the severity of the crisis on the ground. Until you see it for yourself, you cannot appreciate the magnitude of the situation.

Signs of devastation were everywhere even though it had been seven months since the levees were breached. Houses are off of their foundations and water marks are over 10 feet high. There are abandoned cars, and businesses and mold plagued schools.

In some communities, we could clearly see that in spite of the tremendous efforts of residents, cleanup has been slow and recovery efforts challenged by government complacency. What we heard from the residents was that they felt like they had been abandoned by their government.

During our time with Doris, she shared with us how five days after the storm hit, the first rescue team into St. Bernard Parish were from Canada. College students

from SUNO talked to us about still not having any permanent place to live seven months after the storm. We heard from a teacher who lost her home and her job as a result of the Hurricane.

No person, family, business or home was left untouched and it still showed seven months later in many of the communities we visited.

We now know that the White House and FEMA knew about Katrina's power and potential for devastation. They received reports that Monday evening that the levees had been breached. And since that day, time and again, this Administration has failed to provide the adequate resources needed to help move the Gulf Coast forward.

In fact, Father Maestri told us during our visit with him that three disasters hit New Orleans,—Katrina, then Rita and then FEMA. All Disasters—all equally dangerous to the Gulf Coast.

Our witnesses today will tell you that the Gulf Coast education community is gradually recovering from the devastation. The schools are not all open yet, but those that are—are taking in students. The classrooms exceed capacity in many instances because more and more students return each day.

College students are back in school—or as the Dillard students like to say, they are at back in school at the Hotel "Dilton"—because those students are attending classes in the Hilton Hotel \* \* \* And on other campuses, classes are being held in trailers.

Teachers and administrators are living in FEMA trailers next to schools. Students and their families are living in trailers in front of their gutted homes.

In communities across the country, schools opened their doors to displaced students and their families, straining local education budgets. Texas has taken in over 40,000 students into its schools, Georgia has over 9,000 students, and other states such as California and Minnesota have also welcomed families and students. All in all, 49 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia have to come to the assistance of these families.

So, there are signs of recovery everywhere.

And, this is due to the determination of the people you will hear from today, people who were determined to get the schools opened and students back into the classrooms. They overcame the obstacles thrown in their path by FEMA and they have done so not knowing if or when federal assistance would arrive.

The Bush administration has made the recovery effort that more difficult, by treating this disaster like it was just any other. It is not just any disaster. The magnitude of the destruction we saw was so great that we need to throw out the old disaster playbook and come up with newer, better and more flexible ways of meeting the challenges faced by the Gulf Coast.

This morning, the Democrats on this committee released a report calling for the designation of an Education Recovery Czar at the Department of Education. This person would be responsible for the recovery and rebuilding effort during a disaster—removing FEMA from this role.

We call for increased funding to help rebuild schools, colleges and universities—at this point only two percent of the federal disaster assistance appropriated by Congress has been designated for education—\$1.4 billion. The damage estimate for one school district alone is one billion. Clearly, more resources are needed to help open schools and keep them open.

We also call for greater flexibility for school and college administrators to determine how these funds will be used. Each school system, college and university had unique needs during this emergency. One size does not fit all in this situation.

Mr. Chairman, I encourage you to schedule additional hearings on this issue where we can, in bipartisan fashion, work together to assist these school districts. The hurricane season and new school year are approaching fast. Gulf Coast Communities deserve to know that this time—the Federal Government is prepared to help.

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Chairman McKEON. Thank you, Mr. Miller, and I appreciate you and the other members who have also visited the region.

I think as you were talking, it reminded me of some of the similar things I went through in the earthquake of 1994. Our district was devastated, and some of the same problems that we had that we are having now we had then with—it would be nice if we could learn from all of those experiences and not have the same problems reappear, but I guess they do.

When you were talking about people that are there for a short time and then leave, and you have to refamiliarize new people, we went through all that same stuff, and it is just hard for the people that are suffering that have gone through the problems.

I ask unanimous consent now that Mr. Brady of Texas—and I believe Mr. Jefferson of Louisiana is going to join us—be allowed to participate in today's hearing. Without objection, so ordered.

We have a distinguished panel of witnesses today, and I would like to begin by welcoming all of you here.

And we have people that have asked to be able to introduce you, and we would like to have Mr. Jindal now introduce Dr. Cowen, Dr. Hughes and Father Maestri.

Mr. Jindal?

Mr. JINDAL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I also want to thank you and Chairman Castle, Bobby Scott and the others that came to Louisiana.

I also want to thank this committee's good work on the K-12, as well as the higher education bills we have already passed as a Congress.

It is my privilege to introduce three of our distinguished panelists.

The first is Dr. Scott Cowen, Tulane's 14th president. He holds joint appointments with Seymour Goodman Memorial Professor of Business at the Freeman School of Business, as well as being the professor of economics at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

He came to Tulane in 1998 in Case Western Reserve University where he is a member of the faculty for 23 years, and where he was also dean at its Weatherhead School of Management for 14 years.

He holds several leadership positions in national academic and professional associations. For example, he is currently a board member of the American Council on Education, a member of its nominating committee, executive committee, and chair of the planning committee for its 2003 annual meeting.

He is also a board member of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. He is a conference USA representative on the NCAA board, as well as a member of the NCAA executive committee.

He is a past president of the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools and Businesses, and finally, he was appointed chair of the Public School Committee of Mayor Ray Nagin's Bring Back New Orleans Commission.

My wife is a proud graduate of Tulane's undergraduate university, as well as their business school.

I am also pleased to introduce Dr. Marvalene Hughes, the president of Dillard University. Dr. Hughes came to see me last summer literally weeks before Katrina as she was taking on her new assignment. She has endured a baptism of fire. This has literally been her first year as president of that distinguished university. She was the first woman to hold the position of Dillard University permanently.

She is the former president of California's State University Stanislaus. She held executive positions at the University of Min-

nesota, University of Toledo, Arizona State University and San Diego State University.

She is a member of several local and national boards. She has written numerous publications and speaks throughout the United States and abroad.

At Tuskegee University, she received her Bachelor of Science degree in English and history, Master of Science Degree in counseling administration. She has a Ph.D. from Florida State University, completed post-doctorate work at Harvard University's Summer Institute and Oxford University's Roundtable.

Dillard plays a very, very important role, not only for Louisiana, but for our entire nation and has a very proud history.

Finally, I am pleased to introduce Father William Maestri from the Archdiocese of New Orleans. He is a superintendent of the Office of Catholic Schools.

My daughter is actually a student of one of their schools, and she reports that she was displaced about 5 months. She reports she was happy to come back, because she likes lunch better at their schools than the schools in Baton Rouge.

He is a native of New Orleans. He was educated in the Archdiocese of New Orleans Catholic School System for elementary and secondary schools.

He did his undergraduate studies at St. Joseph's Seminary College, receiving a degree in philosophy with a minor in history. Graduated from Tulane receiving a Master's Degree in philosophy. Did doctoral studies and seminars over several years at University of California Berkeley. His focus is on teaching and education, including at law and medical schools in New Orleans and California.

He taught at Tulane, Loyola, Pepperdine and Charity Hospital School of Medicine in New Orleans. He has authored numerous books, articles and reviews on philosophy, theology and public policy.

He currently serves as the superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Archdiocese of New Orleans, as well as the director of communications, as well as being the spokesperson for the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

Finally, he works as a theology and philosophy instructor at the Notre Dame Seminary College.

I want to thank him. I know the diocese has taken in thousands of students, displaced students, after the two storms.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the privilege of introducing our distinguished panelists. And I believe we have got some wonderful panelists from Cameron and St. Bernard Parish. And I am going to allow my colleagues to introduce them as well.

Chairman McKEON. Thank you, Mr. Jindal.

And Mr. Johnson will now introduce the next witness, Mr. Nelson.

Mr. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is a tremendous honor for me to introduce a terrific leader for education in Texas, Richardson Independent School District Superintendent Jim Nelson.

As many of you know, after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita ravaged the Gulf, many families found comfort and shelter in north

Texas. Richardson stepped up to the plate and rolled out the welcome mat.

Richardson ISD is a school district with 34,000 students, generally processed and enrolled 1,790 hurricane evacuees. For a school district of only 34,000, that is tremendous. There is still 790 students in Richardson ISD who may go home or they may not. Time will tell.

According to the Texas Education Agency, nearly 36,000 Hurricane Katrina students are still enrolled in Texas schools.

Jim Nelson has a record of success in education and leadership. He has been a member of various school boards and at times, the president of those boards. Governor Bush then appointed Jim Nelson to the newly created State Board for Educators Certification in 1996, and he served as chairman there until 1999.

You know, in the spring of 2003, at the request of the White House and Department of Defense, Mr. Nelson traveled to Baghdad, Iraq, as a senior adviser to the Iraqi Ministry of Education to assist with the rebuilding of the Iraqi school system. He began his duties as Richardson ISD superintendent in the summer of 2004.

He was also a practicing lawyer for 24 years. We will try not to hold that against him. Please give him a big welcome.

Thank you for allowing me to introduce him, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McKEON. If I had known you were going to take shots at lawyers, I might have not allowed you to do that introduction. We will let it go this time.

[Laughter.]

Mr. Boustany, you may introduce the next witness, Dr. Chance. Mr. BOUSTANY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, it gives me great pleasure to introduce my constituent and a true leader in the southwest Louisiana education community, Dr. Doug Chance.

Doug has served as superintendent of Cameron Parish Public Schools since January of 2003. And as my colleagues know, Cameron Parish was ground zero for Hurricane Rita. The storm destroyed 62 percent of all school facilities in the parish, yet under Dr. Chance's leadership, classroom instruction resumed 24 teaching days after Rita made landfall.

I have had the honor of working with Doug in the months since Rita's devastated southwest Louisiana, and there really is no one more qualified than he to provide the committee with an accurate assessment of the storms impact on our public education systems and the progress we are making toward recovery.

Dr. Chance has a long and distinguished career as an educator. Prior to joining Cameron Parish Public Schools, he served as vice president for academic affairs and professor at Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas.

He also served as a lecturer and instructor at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana, and at McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana, where he received his Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate in education.

I am very proud to have Dr. Chance representing the 7th District of Louisiana today, and I welcome his testimony. Thank you.

Chairman McKEON. Thank you, Mr. Boustany.

And last but not least is Ms. Doris Voitier, who was appointed superintendent of St. Bernard Parish Public Schools on August 10, 2004. She became superintendent after a 33-year career in the St. Bernard school system following experiences as a high school mathematics teacher, supervisor of accounting and instruction, associate superintendent for finance and support services, and assistant superintendent.

As superintendent, she is spearheading efforts to rebuild the school district in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which has destroyed each of the system's 20 buildings and schools.

And we appreciate you being here too, Ms. Voitier.

Let me just explain the sequence of events here. We will go in the same order which you were introduced, from my left to my right. And each of you has 5 minutes. The light system is green for 4 minutes, yellow for 1 minute, and then red thereafter. So if you see red, you want to sort of think about wrapping up if you could.

And then each member up here—and there is a lot of interest in this hearing—will have 5 minutes to ask questions. I will probably have to repeat this, but just remember, not all of you can answer every question in a 5-minute period to give the members a chance to say what they want to say and answer questions. So as you get to the Q and A period—generally, we can't even ask a question in 5 minutes, much less have you answer it in the 5-minute period, so we need to be a little bit cautious about that.

But we are delighted to have you here.

A number of us here have had a chance to go down to the region that was affected by the hurricanes and have great empathy with what has happened there. And our goal, frankly, is to determine what we can do as a committee of Congress working with the administration to relieve, continue to relieve—I think this is going to go on for a long time—a number of the problems you have. And, hopefully, this hearing will help point us in that direction.

So with that, Dr. Cowen, we will start with you, sir.

**STATEMENT OF SCOTT S. COWEN, PH.D., PRESIDENT, TULANE UNIVERSITY**

Mr. COWEN. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Thank you for assisting with education recovery efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, and thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak with you today.

In particular, I want to acknowledge Congressman Jindal and Charles Boustany, members of the Louisiana Delegation, for their support of education in our state.

I am going to briefly discuss post-secondary and K through 12 education in my dual roles as president of Tulane University and chair of the Bring New Orleans Education Committee.

Overall, education, both K through 12 and post-secondary, have made significant progress since the hurricane despite almost overwhelming challenges. But we still have a long way to go before education in our city and region are back to anything that approaches what we used to deem normal.

First, the good news for higher education. When Tulane and the other 14 public and private colleges and universities in New Orleans, including Dillard University, led by my good friend, Dr.

Hughes, reopened in January, it represented a significant step in our city's recovery. Fifty-five thousand of the more than 84,000 college students who were enrolled in our institutions prior to Katrina returned. At Tulane, we welcomed back 88 percent of our full-time students.

Our colleges and universities represent a significant part of the region's post-Katrina employment picture. Approximately 20,000 jobs are associated with higher education in the city. And as an industry, higher education is a critical economic development engine for New Orleans.

In fact, when Tulane University opened up on January 17, that week alone, the population of the parish increased by 20 percent in 1 week just because of our reopening. The future of higher education in New Orleans looks much brighter than we could have hoped for 8 months ago.

But I would be very remiss if I presented a picture of complete recovery, because higher education still faces many challenges. For example, at Tulane University, we face between \$150 million and \$250 million in physical damage to our campus, in addition to an anticipated operating loss of \$100 million this year, as well as another to-be-determined operating loss for next year and the years thereafter.

To reopen in January, we borrowed \$150 million, which put us at our maximum borrowing capacity. To date, 8 months after Hurricane Katrina, we have seen no money from FEMA and only partial relief from private insurance.

In order to achieve financial stability, we announced in December 2005 a sweeping reorganization of Tulane University that represents the largest restructuring of an American higher education institution in more than a century in the United States.

The recruitment and retention of top-tier students and faculty remains difficult because of the lingering doubts about the ability of New Orleans to fully recover.

New Orleans and its surrounding region cannot recover without the survival of its colleges and universities. Higher education pumps approximately \$3 billion each year into the region's economy, and Tulane University alone is now the largest employer—public or private—in New Orleans by a factor of two.

I understand that Congress faces many issues related to Gulf Coast recovery, and spending must be done wisely. As one of the few fully functioning industries in New Orleans, a healthy higher education community with its influx of intellectual capital, its ability to conduct and attract high quality research and educational programs, and its economic development potential is crucial to our immediate recovery and our future success.

Congress has played and will continue to play a major role in ensuring the health of our higher education community. The establishment of an \$800 million education relief loan program would provide us with desperately needed cash as bridge funding to assist with the retention and recruitment of faculty and students, as well as helping us rebuild our campuses until funds are received from insurance and FEMA.

We ask the committee's careful consideration of this repayable loan program. Your support of this important initiative is critical

to our survival and success in rebuilding higher education and in rebuilding New Orleans.

Now I would like to turn our attention to K through 12 education in New Orleans. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans has one of the worst public school systems in the nation. Hurricane Katrina has given us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to turn it into one of the best. I am pleased to have led a team that developed a long-term vision and plan for our school system in Orleans Parish.

Since schools began reopening in November 2005, each school has reached its full capacity within 1 to 2 weeks. To date, only 20 percent of pre-Katrina schools have reopened with an enrollment of 12,000 students. The vast majority of these schools have opened as charter schools, thanks to special grants from the Department of Education and from the private sector.

Our charter school strategy has been integral to the immediate recovery of public education in New Orleans. There are many challenges that currently face the New Orleans public school system. However, the largest and most immediate challenge is rebuilding damaged school facilities by August, when we expect our current school population to double.

Katrina damaged 70 percent of the public school buildings in Orleans Parish causing an estimated \$800 million to \$900 million in property damage alone. To date, there is neither sufficient funds nor a commitment of funds to repair facilities for approximately 30,000 returning students.

Therefore, I urge you to support the school system's request for approval from FEMA for immediate funding of temporary repairs, as well as an extension of the June 30th completion deadline.

Without repairs to our schools and the extension of the deadline, we run the risk of not having enough classrooms when the children of New Orleans come home.

Both higher education institutions and K through 12, public education system must overcome many challenges. But with the support of the American people and our public leaders, including this committee, we will recover. Education is and will continue to be the cornerstone in the immediate and long-term revitalization of New Orleans.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Cowen follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Scott S. Cowen, Ph.D., President, Tulane University**

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today regarding educational recovery in the city of New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina came ashore on Aug. 29, 2005. We have made enormous progress despite almost overwhelming challenges, and still have a long way to go before education in our city and region are back to anything that approaches what we used to deem "normal."

First, I want to thank the Committee for your actions in helping higher education recovery efforts in New Orleans—specifically, legislation that provided loan forgiveness to our students, the reallocation of campus-based aid, and the waiver authority given to the Department of Education. I would also like to thank the Department of Education for its tireless efforts on behalf of our institutions and our students.

*Higher Education: The Good News*

When Tulane and the other 14 public and private colleges and universities in New Orleans reopened in January, it represented a significant step in our city's recovery. Of the more than 84,000 college students that were enrolled in our institutions prior to Katrina, more than 55,000 of them returned. Tulane welcomed back 88 percent

of our full-time students, including 85 percent of our freshman class—remarkable, considering these students spent only a few hours on campus before having to evacuate. The energy and enthusiasm these students brought with them instilled an almost instantaneous air of hope into a city still reeling from the devastation of Katrina.

Our colleges and universities also represent a significant part of the New Orleans post-Katrina employment picture. Approximately 20,000 jobs are associated with higher education in the city, and most of our universities struggled to continue paying our faculties and staffs during the evacuation and post-Katrina period—both because it was the right thing to do, and because we knew a mass exodus of educated professionals to other areas would deal another devastating blow to not only our own institutions but the city, state and region.

The return of our higher education workforces throughout November, December and January reinvigorated our neighborhoods and businesses. They are key cornerstones to rebuilding our city and region.

#### *Higher Education: The Challenges*

The future of higher education in New Orleans looks much brighter than we ever could have hoped for eight months ago following Katrina. But I would be remiss if I presented a picture of complete recovery, because that is simply not the case. Our higher education community, including Tulane University, still faces many challenges before it can say it has fully recovered from Katrina.

The price of our January return and reopening has been steep. I will speak primarily of Tulane University's experiences here because that is what I know best, but rest assured that each and every higher education institution in the New Orleans area is undergoing significant ongoing challenges in terms of finances and student retention.

As I stated previously, Tulane University felt it was crucial to continue paying employees during the four months we were closed so that we could retain critical faculty and staff members. We also faced more than \$150 million in physical damage to our campus. In order to reopen in January, we borrowed \$150 million and countless more in lost research and library assets, which maxed out our borrowing capacity. We have seen no money at all from FEMA and little relief from private insurance. In order to achieve financial stability, in December we announced a sweeping reorganization of Tulane University that represents the largest university restructuring of an American institution in more than a century. We were forced to lay off more than 400 full-time staff members and more than 160 faculty members, including a third of our medical school faculty, plus eliminate long-standing academic programs in engineering and reduce our Division I athletic programs by 50 percent. The reorganization will save us \$50 million, but we still face a \$100 million budget deficit this year as well as a \$25 million deficit next year. Attracting and retaining top-tier students and faculty to New Orleans remains difficult despite our best efforts because of the lingering doubts about the ability of the city itself to fully recover.

#### *Higher Education: Looking Forward*

Put simply, New Orleans and its surrounding region cannot recover without the survival of its colleges and universities. Higher education pumps approximately \$3 billion each year into the region's economy. Tulane University is a major part of that. Prior to Katrina, Tulane University was the largest private employer in Orleans Parish; now it is the single largest employer of any type. The university's economic impact on the New Orleans economy before Katrina totaled more than \$842 million a year; our impact on the state's economy totaled more than \$1.12 billion a year. The closing of Tulane University for four months following Hurricane Katrina had a devastating effect on not only the university, but the city and state.

We will continue to need your help in our ongoing efforts to revive higher education in the city and region. I understand that Congress faces many issues related to Gulf Coast recovery, and that spending must be done wisely and with an eye toward what will offer the greatest benefit to the most people. As one of the few fully functioning industries in New Orleans, a healthy higher education community—with its influx of intellectual capital, its ability to conduct and attract high-quality research and educational programs to the region, and its economic development potential—is crucial not only to the region's immediate recovery but to its future success.

Congress can play a major role in ensuring the health of our higher education community. As our institution members have discussed with your Committee, we are still in desperate need of additional institutional assistance. The establishment of an Education Relief Program, along the lines approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee in the pending Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill,

would provide funds to assist us with the overwhelming task of compensating for lost tuition and revenue while we also rebuild and repair our facilities. I realize such a program may be difficult in these tight budgetary times, but we ask the Committee's careful consideration of this proposal, or something similar, before making any final judgments. The Committee's ultimate support for additional relief, along the lines of the Senate action thus far, is vital to our institutions. I would emphasize that the Senate's Education Relief Program is a re-payable loan program for only those colleges and universities that were forced to suspend operations and were not able to re-open fully in existing facilities due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The Secretary of Education would administer the program and provide support directly to the institutions, something that is critical to the get the relief to only those who need it and to ensure taxpayer's dollars are spent wisely.

If the Senate Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill is sent to conference committee with the House, with the Education Relief Program intact, your Committee's continued support and that of the House Appropriations Committee and House Leaders is critical to our short- and long-term survival and success in rebuilding New Orleans.

As I have said, Tulane has done surprisingly well in retaining our undergraduates in the wake of Katrina. Unfortunately, the picture is not as rosy with our graduate students. The consolidation of many of our graduate programs, required for financial viability, has made it difficult to attract these students back to New Orleans. If the region is to fully recover, we must address this problem. Not only do graduate students drive local economies through their participation in research, they fill highly skilled jobs and represent a potential resource for the reconstruction and revitalization of New Orleans. Graduate students aren't just bright—they're tireless, enthusiastic and engaged, and many would relish the opportunity to use their expertise in bringing New Orleans back through research, development, planning, engineering, and volunteerism. But this opportunity is not enough in and of itself—graduate students need financial support so they can devote their full attention to their academic and volunteer activities. Within the Department of Education, there are several graduate programs that could be helpful to us if the Committee would recommend temporary preference to institutions affected by the hurricanes and students applying to our institutions. These include:

- Graduate Assistance in Areas of Need (GANN);
- Javits Fellowships;
- Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program.

Outside the Department of Education, programs for which your support would be very helpful include: the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowships; NSF Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeships, National Institutes of Health Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Research Training Grants and Fellowships, Department of Defense National Defense Science and Engineering Fellowship Program; and the Department of Homeland Security Fellowships and Scholarships Program.

#### *K-12 Education: The Good News*

The damage from Hurricane Katrina and subsequent flooding in the city of New Orleans is still being tallied. But with disaster comes opportunity, and nowhere is that more evident than in K-12 public education in New Orleans. Prior to Katrina, New Orleans had one of the worst public school systems in the nation. Katrina has given us a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to turn it into one of the best.

The Orleans Parish public school district, with roughly 60,000 students pre-Katrina, was the 49th-largest public school district in the United States. The numbers tell the story of the problems this school system faced:

- Of 117 public schools, 107 were academic "failures" by any number of measures and were struggling to improve academic performance to avoid state takeover.
- Seventy-five percent of eighth-graders scored below state averages and had failed to reach basic proficiency in English.
- Dropout rates were the seventh highest in the United States and four times the Louisiana average.
- Decades of neglect and mismanagement had created both a budget shortfall and serious debt load for the parish school board.

Before Katrina, the state of Louisiana developed a Recovery School District to take command of the five lowest-performing schools. After Katrina, an additional 102 failing schools were put under the auspices of the state-run district.

Since schools began re-opening in November 2005, each school has reached their full capacity within one to two weeks of their opening. To date, 25 of the 117 schools have reopened, serving 12,000 students—which represents only 20 percent of the pre-Katrina student population. The U.S. Department of Education and Federal govern-

ment continue to provide assistance to help our city recover and get families back on their feet. The Department of Education has provided more than \$20 million through a special charter school grant to Louisiana, enabling numerous public schools in New Orleans to reopen as charter schools, expediting children's education and the region's recovery. 70 percent of public schools currently open are charter schools, managed by the Recovery School District, the Orleans Parish School Board, or the State Board of Education.

As one of 17 members of New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin's Bring New Orleans Back Commission and chairman of its committee on public education, I was pleased to have led a team in carefully envisioning what our troubled public school system could become if it were given enough planning, leadership and resources.

The Bring New Orleans Back Education Committee led a comprehensive process to develop a plan to transform New Orleans school system. We received input from a diverse group of more than 1,500 students, parents, teachers, business leaders and community members from New Orleans to ensure the plan represented the voice of our city. Additionally, education experts from around the world provided insights into what has worked in high-performing schools with similar students and similar socioeconomic factors. Using this extensive research, the Education Committee developed a plan to fundamentally change the way we run our schools. In January, the Education Committee presented a blueprint for reinventing New Orleans' public school system. There is a great hope for this plan, and recognition by everyone involved that we have a rare opportunity to turn things around.

Among the plans and goals:

- Delivering learning and achievement for all students, regardless of race, socio-economic class or where they live in New Orleans, with the goal of graduating all students ready for college and the workplace. New Orleans public school students are 96 percent African-American and three-quarters of them qualify for free or reduced-price lunch programs. That should have absolutely no bearing on the quality of the education they receive or the opportunities that education will afford them.
- Developing a new school-focused philosophy that empowers the schools to make more of their own financial and administrative decisions rather than relying on a central oversight board.
- Establishing a new Educational Network Model that organizes schools into small groups, or networks, to provide support, foster collaboration and ensure accountability.
- Encouraging new partnerships with business, faith-based, or community groups to develop programs for learning enrichment and emotional and psychological well-being.

We can take advantage of this opportunity to systemically transform the New Orleans public school system, which can be used as a model for other urban school districts.

#### *K-12 Education: The Challenges*

We have a unified vision for what the New Orleans public school system should look like. Our challenge as we move into the fall, when we expect up to 50 percent of our pre-Katrina public school students to be back, is to make sure that schools are reopened in accordance with that long-term plan.

There are three key challenges New Orleans faces as it reopens and rebuilds its public school system.

First, the results of an extensive demographic study place fall student enrollment projections between 28,500 and 34,000. This projection, and the fact that each subsequent school fills to capacity shortly after opening, substantiate the need for more schools in New Orleans for the 2006-07 school year. The currently available facilities will not provide the necessary capacity to meet this demand; therefore, additional facilities are required.

Second, many decisions regarding short-term planning will have to take into consideration the repopulation of various areas of the parish, the student population in those areas, and the cost to rebuild schools that meet the flood mitigation requirements. There are multiple governing bodies responsible for making these decisions, including the Orleans Parish School Board, the Recovery School District, and the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. As they work towards re-building public education in the parish, immense coordination in the short and long terms and a shared vision are the only ways to ensure success.

Third, the Orleans Parish school system is facing a financial crisis. Without the help of one-time funds, loans and deferral of substantial unemployment compensation liabilities, the system faces an estimated \$111 million cash-flow shortfall through June 30 and \$275 million in legacy debt. Decreases in local revenue mean an estimated \$1,400 per child less in 2006-07 than before Katrina.

Given sound financial management, dedicated leadership and a spirit of cooperation among all members of our community, the outlook for the Orleans Parish public school system is brighter than it has been in many, many years. It will require vigilance and diligence on everyone's part to ensure that we continue to make progress toward the long-term vision that has been developed.

*K-12 Education: Looking Forward*

Thanks to the federal funds that have been made available to the New Orleans education system, schools have been able to accommodate an increasing number of returning families. Unfortunately, as is the case with higher education, the K-12 system has received no assistance from FEMA in covering the considerable repair costs for its facilities. Katrina damaged 70 percent of the public school buildings in Orleans Parish, causing an estimated \$800-\$900 million in property damage and more than \$250 million in business interruption losses.

Currently, the school system is planning for the return of twice as many students this fall. It has been determined that the repair of existing facilities to be used as temporary facilities, as opposed to the installation of modular classrooms, is the most cost-effective and viable strategy. In addition, this approach is more educationally sound for the public school children of Orleans Parish. There have been neither funds nor a commitment of funds for temporary repairs that must be made before the next hurricane season begins on June 1-a deadline that is virtually impossible to achieve. Therefore, I urge you to support the school system's request for approval from FEMA for the repairs to these facilities to be classified as Category B temporary work under the Stafford Act. The precedent has been set for consideration of this request based on temporary repair of existing applicant buildings in the California State/Northridge repairs in a previous disaster. The same consideration for this request is requested.

As I previously mentioned, the deadline for temporary repairs ends June 30. With less than a third of the necessary work complete, I am requesting that the Committee support the extension of temporary repairs until the end of the year. Without the assistance from FEMA for facilities and the extension of the repair completion deadline, we run the risk of not having enough classrooms ready to educate returning children in August.

*Higher Education and K-12: Conclusion*

Repaired levees and rebuilt homes and businesses are things New Orleans needs in order to survive in the short term. But it is through its system of education at all levels that the city can achieve the substantive change, success and energy that it needs to become a healthy and thriving urban center.

Both our higher education institutions and our K-12 public education system have many challenges still to overcome. But with the support of the American people and through our public leaders such as those of you on this Committee, we will recover. And through our recovery will come the biggest-possible boost to the long-term revitalization of the city of New Orleans.

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Chairman McKEON. Thank you very much, Dr. Cowen. We appreciate your testimony.

Dr. Hughes?

**STATEMENT OF MARVALENE HUGHES, PH.D., PRESIDENT,  
DILLARD UNIVERSITY**

Ms. HUGHES. Good morning. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I want to thank all of you for taking the time today to cause us to focus on the tremendous progress that we have made. Sometimes we become so focused on surviving that we forget the progress.

I especially want to thank Representatives Jindal and Boustany, who have worked so tirelessly to assist us in higher education following Hurricane Katrina.

I also want to thank the committee for its work related to legislation that provided critical financial aid assistance and loan forgiveness to our students whose education studies has been disrupted by Katrina.

It is important for me to pause to say immediately that the Department of Education has been a critical part in our recovery today.

To give you a little background on Dillard University, Dillard University is a private historical black college. It was founded in 1869 and is located in the Gentile neighborhood of New Orleans.

Dillard has long been a cornerstone of educational excellence in the New Orleans community for 137 years. A majority of Dillard's students are the first in their families to attend college, one of the several critical roles that Dillard University has played in New Orleans and the state of Louisiana and throughout the country.

Dillard has always made the commitment of producing African-American men and women dedicated to public service throughout the world.

I joined Dillard University on July 1, 2005, almost 2 months to the date before Hurricane Katrina. Through my years of administrative service as president at California State University Stanislaus, I thought I had prepared for a presidency in my many administrative posts, but nothing prepared me for what I found when Hurricane Katrina arrived.

Dillard University was totally devastated by Hurricane Katrina. To get the picture of the severity of this devastation, if you can just imagine one campus totally under water 8 to 10 feet for about 3 to 4 weeks. As a result, the hurricane caused significant damage affecting almost all of Dillard's facilities.

Dillard estimates that its losses are in the hundreds of millions of dollars. We had three residence halls that were completely destroyed by fire, two or three other buildings that will be demolished, and currently, all of our buildings have been gutted and remediated. It took about 7 months to complete that process.

Following campus clean up, we were able to identify a construction company, and the campus is now under construction. The devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina and the lack of tuition revenue over the entire first semester left Dillard University in a drastically reduced situation. Two-thirds of our faculty were reduced, and we currently have a little over 50 percent of our students.

Dillard University could not return to its home campus as you well know, but we were determined to return to New Orleans because New Orleans is our home, and we wanted to be a part of the economic recovery. So we relocated in the Hilton Hotel where living and learning are occurring for faculty staff and students together. Because we were unable to have access to science laboratories and libraries as would be necessary, my good friend, Scott Cowen, has been very instrumental in making all of these facilities available to us.

We are hoping that we will be able to return to occupy some of our campus beginning in the fall. It had been anticipated by some that we would leave the state. Now, we had even been invited to go to Atlanta, Georgia, but I thought with the kind of 137 years of legacy established by Dillard University, that it was important we return. So Dillard University has returned home. And about 50 percent of our students are there in spite of the fact that they could not return to their campus. Currently, we are all living together.

Again, I thank you for the assistance Congress has provided to assist higher education institutions for the losses that we have suffered during Hurricane Katrina. Federally appropriated funds received through the hurricane relief legislation passed in December 2005 will assist the university in its efforts to rehire its exceptional faculty, to rebuild lost academic programs and to retrack students to rebuild lost enrollment. That will be a major challenge for us. Although we are making significant progress in restoring our campus facilities so that we can welcome our students back to campus this fall, there is much to be done.

While Dillard is pursuing all of its options through insurance, FEMA and private philanthropy, Dillard has needs that Congress can continue to assist us with. Dillard's estimated rebuilding costs are far greater than the amount Dillard anticipates to receive from FEMA and insurance.

Dillard University and many other institutions have not yet received the kind of support that is going to be necessary to sustain us. We request that the House of Representatives and the committee supporting education relief loan program for higher education institutions, as well as amending the historically black college and university capital financing program to provide long loan terms that are favorable to those HBCUs affected by the Gulf Coast. These programs will provide the bridging finance to higher education institutions that are so essential to our recovery.

In conclusion, when classes resume on the Dillard campus this fall, the exceptional academic quality for which Dillard University has long been noted will not be diminished by recent events. Dillard University is indeed determined to come back stronger, to come back better, and to come back far improved.

We will join the members of the education community who are part of the consortium that has been formed.

Mr. Chairman and members of committee, I thank you for all the work your committee has done to assist institutions and students affected by the Gulf Coast hurricanes, and I ask for your continued support for our ongoing recovery efforts. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Hughes follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Marvalene Hughes, Ph.D., President, Dillard University**

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. Thank you for taking the time today to focus on the tremendous progress the higher education community has made in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and to discuss the challenges still facing institutions of higher education affected by the Gulf Coast Hurricanes of 2005. I also want to thank Representative Bobby Jindal for his tireless work on behalf of institutions of higher education that were affected by Hurricane Katrina. I want to thank the Committee for its work related to introducing and passing legislation that provides critical financial aid assistance and loan forgiveness to our students many of whom rely on financial aid, reallocation of campus-based aid, and providing the Department of Education with waiver authority as it relates to financial aid requirements for those students whose academic studies were disrupted as a result of Hurricane Katrina. I would also like to note, since immediately after Hurricane Katrina, the Department of Education has never waivered in its support of those higher education institutions that were devastated by Hurricane Katrina and is a critical partner in our recovery efforts.

*Background on Dillard University*

Dillard University, a private, historically black college/university (HBCU) located in the Gentilly neighborhood of New Orleans, has long been a cornerstone of edu-

cational excellence in the New Orleans community. Dillard's historical origin dates back to 1869 when the lawyers who defended Africans from the slave ship Amistad founded what was to become Dillard University. Dillard has always made the commitment to producing African American men and women dedicated to public service throughout the world.

A majority of Dillard students are the first in their family to attend college, one of several critical roles that Dillard University serves in New Orleans and the State of Louisiana. Dillard also is an integral part of the New Orleans economy by providing employment to a significant number of New Orleans citizens in lower income communities.

Approximately 41 percent of Dillard students pursue advanced academic studies within five years of graduation. Dillard graduates have gone on to graduate programs at such schools as Columbia, Emory, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Northwestern, Ohio State, Temple and the University of New Orleans.

Dillard University students can choose among 38 academic majors in six academic divisions—Social Sciences, Natural Sciences and Public Health, Humanities, Business, Nursing, and Educational and Psychological Studies. Over 30 percent of Dillard's students graduate from the Division of Natural Sciences and Public Health with a bachelor's degree in biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics or public health.

In 2005, U.S. News and World Report ranked Dillard among the top 10 liberal arts universities in the South. In addition, Dillard is the only university in Louisiana to earn an A+ rating for four consecutive years in its teacher training program. Dillard has earned an international reputation for excellence, attracting students from the greater New Orleans metropolitan area, the state of Louisiana, 34 other states and District of Columbia, and more than a dozen other countries. It is critical that the Dillard University remain a vital part of the New Orleans educational landscape and community.

#### *Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Dillard University*

I joined Dillard University on July 1, 2005, almost two months to the date before Hurricane Katrina. Through my years as college president at California State University at Stanislaus, nothing could prepare me for what I have experienced over the last 8 months. Dillard University was devastated by Hurricane Katrina and its subsequent flooding. Located in one of the lowest elevation points of New Orleans, our campus was engulfed with flood waters as a result of the breached levees. As a result, the hurricane caused significant structural damage affecting almost all of Dillard University's facilities. Flood levels throughout the campus ranged from eight to ten feet, destroying the first floors of all dormitories, the Dillard University International Center for Economic Freedom Building, and the theater housed in the Samuel DuBois Cook Fine Arts Building. Most buildings incurred severe roof damage and require a great deal of restoration work, and three buildings, including 2 dormitories, will have to be leveled and rebuilt. Not only did Dillard sustain wind and flood damage, but shortly after the hurricane, fire destroyed three additional student dormitory buildings. Due to the flooding, fire and rescue services could not reach the campus.

Dillard estimates that its total capital losses to buildings and facilities to be approximately \$130 million with soft cost such as building contents, faculty salaries and rebuilding lost academic programs will range in the tens of millions of dollars. Since most of Dillard's campus sustained significant damage, the University's facilities will not be able to accommodate students until the Fall 2006 semester. Dillard began its campus cleanup efforts immediately after the hurricane to rid the campus of debris. Currently, the campus cleanup is complete and Dillard is in the process of renovating and reconstructing the campus.

The devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina and lack of tuition revenue also resulted in the University having to drastically reduce two-thirds of its faculty and staff workforce. Of the 350 faculty and staff that existed prior to Katrina, Dillard had to lay off 160 faculty and staff leaving Dillard with only 190 remaining faculty and staff. Although all tenured faculty remain at Dillard and continue to offer the finest education to students, one of the University's greatest needs is to rehire faculty and staff lost as a result of the hurricane as we seek to rebuild our student enrollment.

#### *Higher Education—A Vital Part of the New Orleans Rebuilding Effort*

Higher education and tourism are the two major drivers of the New Orleans economy. After Hurricane Katrina, as one would imagine, tourism was a mere fraction of its pre-Katrina level. Higher education was one of the few industries in New Orleans to become fully functional in January 2006. Joining with the other higher edu-

cation institutions in New Orleans, Dillard University reopened its doors in New Orleans in January 2006. Due to the extent of damage on campus, Dillard was not able to accommodate students on campus this semester. Many advised us, since we could not return to our campus in January, to stay in our make shift headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia and reopen in the Fall. Dillard's administration and its students would not heed that advice. Out of an enrollment of 2155 prior to Katrina, 1073 students returned to Dillard in January. This is remarkable given the fact that Dillard was the only institution of higher education that could not return to its campus. Currently, our students, faculty and staff are being housed at the Hilton Riverside Hotel. The Hilton's ballrooms were converted to classroom space. We are extremely grateful to all those in New Orleans who have offered assistance to the University, its students, faculty and staff during this difficult period, and other universities like Tulane University, who graciously offered use of its science laboratory facilities while our campus undergoes extensive repairs.

We are making significant progress in restoring our campus' facilities, importantly, we will hold our commencement on July 1st on the Avenue of the Oaks at Dillard University for the Senior Class of 2006. Dillard has remediated the damage and is working expeditiously to renovate and restore all damaged buildings on its campus. Dillard is on track to reopen its gates and welcome students back onto its campus this fall. However, there remains much work to be done. Five dormitories must be rebuilt and classrooms, the library, administration headquarters, the student union and the gymnasium must be restored and the campus grounds re-landscaped.

#### *Challenges Facing Dillard and the Higher Education Community*

On behalf of Dillard University, I thank you for the assistance Congress has provided to higher education institutions for direct and incremental losses due to Hurricane Katrina. Federally appropriated funds received through the Hurricane Relief legislation passed in December 2005 will assist the University in its efforts to rehire its exceptional faculty, renovate classrooms, dormitories, and other critical university buildings, and reattract students to Dillard. The legislation that provided for reallocation of campus based aid and forgiveness has been a tremendous help for those students living in the area whose families lost everything and rely on financial aid to pay their tuition. Indeed, the average income of a Dillard University student's family is \$30,000.

While Dillard is pursuing all of its options through insurance, FEMA, and private philanthropy, Dillard still needs Congress' assistance. Dillard's estimated rebuilding costs are far greater than the amount Dillard has received from the initial appropriation of federal funds in the third supplemental and what we anticipate to receiving from FEMA and insurance. Dillard is using the federal funds received to seed faculty positions, and to rebuild lost academic programs. Dillard University and many other institutions similarly situated, have not yet received funds from FEMA and the university is not in a position to wait for insurance settlements that could be months or years away to rebuild if the university is to survive. We request that the House of Representatives and this Committee support the provisions of the Hurricane supplemental spending bill offered by the Senate Appropriations Committee which provides for an Education Relief Loan Program for higher education institutions as well as amending the Historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs) Capital Financing Program to provide loan terms favorable to those HBCUs affected by the Gulf Coast Hurricanes. These programs will provide bridge financing to higher education institutions so that the schools can immediately rebuild their facilities and programs while they wait for FEMA and insurance reimbursement.

By providing institutions with favorable loan terms under repayable loan programs such as the HBCU Capital Financing Program and the Education Relief Loan Program, Congress will continue to provide invaluable assistance to universities in their extensive rebuilding effort.

#### *Conclusion*

When classes resume on the Dillard campus this fall, the exceptional academic quality for which Dillard has long been noted will not be diminished by recent events. Dillard will continue to be a cornerstone of excellence and a critical part of the New Orleans community and will provide a top tier educational institution for its students, the citizens of New Orleans, the state of Louisiana and the nation. Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I thank you for all the work your Committee has done to assist institutions and students affected by the Gulf Coast hurricanes, and I ask for your continued support for our ongoing recovery efforts.

Chairman McKEON. Thank you.

**STATEMENT OF FR. WILLIAM MAESTRI, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE OFFICE OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW ORLEANS**

Father MAESTRI. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. On behalf of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, I would like to thank you for allowing me to testify, and also a special word of gratitude to Representative Jindal and Representative Boustany.

The extensive and comprehensive network of Catholic education has and is the church's gift to America. For three centuries, beginning in 1725, with the arrival of the Ursuline sisters, even before there was a public school system, before there was America, and before there was a Louisiana, Catholic education was present in the Mississippi Valley.

Water, especially the Mississippi River, was the super highway then to a new America, one characterized by settlements, as well as gigantic muscular expansion. So it is today. New Orleans and Louisiana continues to be essential for a strong, vital America for the 21st century.

Catholic education has been an essential partner and presence in that story. Pre-Hurricane Katrina, the archdiocese of New Orleans operated 107 schools and close to 50,000 students in eight civil parishes. As of today, post-Katrina, the archdiocese has reopened 83 schools, and almost 40,000 children have returned to the classroom.

We have an educational presence once again in all eight civil parishes, including Orleans Parish, where we have 29 schools with 12,297 children back in school, and in St. Bernard, where on Ash Wednesday, we opened essential school K through 8, and there is a tremendous growing population that will be present in the fall.

At the height of student displacement, the archdiocese made welcome hundreds of students from public and non-Catholic schools. The largest level of displacement in the history of this country was provided by Archbishop Rummel High School, which took in over 2,000 displaced students for an entire semester and completely remade their school, in fact, operating three schools throughout the day in order to accommodate displaced students.

Mr. Chairman, we are not just a church of memory. We are a people of hope. And hope is essential for facing great challenges. Louisiana has the highest percentage of students in the Nation attending non-public schools, 16 percent. Ninety-eight percent of our students graduate from high school. Ninety-seven percent attend college. Eighty to low 90 percent graduate from a university, and more than 50 percent of our graduates stay in Louisiana and attend Louisiana colleges and universities.

We offer a quality education. The real question is: How can we keep the quality and expand the reach? There is a tremendous need for a partnership between public and private. Our thinking must change in light of Katrina. There needs to be a tremendous investment in brick and mortar recovery.

The archdiocese operates 12,000—1,254 buildings, more than 1,100 of which were damaged, some very severely, by the storm. We must provide more opportunities for Catholic and private

schools to participate in programs involving public money without sacrificing the unique mission and the healthy pluralism that is necessary for choice among parents.

We ask that if at all be possible to allow the archdiocese to be recognized as an LEA, a local educational agency, create entrance into programs for professional development, teacher training in science and math.

Mr. Chairman, the Archdiocese of New Orleans is not asking for special treatment. We are asking for an opportunity to compete for grants and funds so that we can continue to serve the common good. Our commitment to minority children and children of color in Orleans Parish and throughout the archdiocese is without equal. Right before Katrina, we operated 24 schools with over 12,000 children of the inner city. We have refused to abandon the inner city because we have that commitment. We do not want to do less; we want to do more.

To conclude, we want, in the archdiocese, a better America. We need a strong Louisiana. We cannot abandon the treasure that is New Orleans. Education is essential. We need leave no child behind, and the way to do that is to make sure that every child and family is put first.

Thank you very much for all of your hard work and that of your committee. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Father Maestri follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Fr. William F. Maestri, Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Archdiocese of New Orleans**

*I. Introduction*

Dear Mr. Chairman and members of the House Committee on Education and Workforce. My name is Fr. William F. Maestri and I am Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Thank you for the opportunity to testify concerning this most important issue—education. Schools and education are an impetus to rebuild as they are synonymous with the return of families, the rebuilding of our communities and the recovery of the entire Gulf Coast Region.

In the following testimony, I would like to briefly discuss the following areas:

1. Pre-Katrina situation of the Archdiocese of New Orleans Catholic Schools;
2. The reality of Katrina;
3. Post-Katrina recovery;
4. Lessons learned;
5. Challenges/opportunities moving forward.

*II. Pre-Katrina Picture of the Archdiocesan School System*

Prior to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Archdiocese of New Orleans operated 107 schools in 8 civil parishes with a student population of close to 50,000. These schools included pre-K programs, early childhood, elementary and secondary educational opportunities for children in the archdiocesan area. In addition to our regular programs of study, we had begun a serious effort to address the needs of children with special educational needs throughout the archdiocese. Among these efforts was the establishment of a new special needs high school and a pilot program directed towards children with autism. This was the beginning of a serious effort to provide education for regular children and children with special needs in their educational development.

*III. Katrina*

The landfall of Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005 and its subsequent aftermath caused significant damage to our existing elementary, secondary and special educational facilities and program. In the early days and weeks following Katrina, students and families were scattered in 47 of the 50 states. Like the archdiocese as a whole, the focus of the Office of Catholic Schools was people and their immediate needs. A serious effort was initiated to contact students and their families and relocate all our students who had been in Catholic schools into appropriate edu-

cational facilities. In a few weeks after Katrina, over 90% of our students had been relocated in a Catholic school of their choice where they had settled. The remaining students found adequate educational resources in a public or private setting. Great care was taken to relocate our students and maintain contact with them.

This was a special challenge as it relates to our African American community. In order to achieve our goals of contact and relocation, Catholic school officials and representatives visited various shelters that contained high concentrations of our displaced students. A group of nuns was even sent to make contact with and service student evacuees and their families in the Houston Astrodome. In addition, priests and counselors were sent to work in shelters in Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, Georgia and Arkansas with those who were displaced after Katrina—both our students and families and anyone in need of care and attention. Maintaining contact with our students, parents and teachers was a key element in our immediate recovery plan.

### *III. Post-Katrina*

In response to the devastation, the Archdiocese worked diligently and quickly in significant ways to continue our commitment to education. We believe that it is in the best interest of the community to reopen schools BEFORE students and families returned so they would have a reason to return. Waiting to reopen schools does not give parents and families a reason or make it practical for them to come home and begin the long process of recovery.

This strategy proves to be effective. To date, the archdiocese has reopened 83 schools in throughout all 8 civil parishes with a student population of over 40,000. This re-entry and repopulation of our schools has been a key contributor to our recovery and the recovery of neighborhoods and even the rejoicing of families.

Further advancements will be the result of a renewed commitment to bringing children and families home. We hope in the coming weeks and months to open even more schools and welcome ALL students who want a quality education in a loving, caring and challenging environment.

### *IV. Lessons Learned*

In reflecting on the Catholic Schools' response to Hurricane Katrina and the post-Katrina realities the following lessons have emerged:

1. De-centralization and not over-centralization is crucial to manage a disaster. The ability to open schools so safely and quickly is the result of empowering our individual schools to draw on community resources and individual drive to move forward with support, oversight and assistance from the central school office when needed. Over-centralization tends to paralyze initiative and give a community a sense of powerlessness when it comes to facing challenges. Empowerment, not replacement is crucial.

2. Faith-based communities can serve the common good. In times of great challenges, and in fact catastrophe, the community as a whole needs to draw on these faith-based, mission-driven groups for their resources and support. These groups not only draw on their own ability to help provide materially but also spiritually for the whole community.

3. Government can help but cannot substitute for the power of personal witness, charity and the will to do good.

### *V. Challenges and Opportunities*

The 2005 Hurricane Season has left the Archdiocese of New Orleans Catholic School System with a number of significant challenges.

1. The need to maintain a significant level of ministry in light of severe damage and a dwindling support-base for those ministries. The archdiocese is facing severe economic challenges in maintaining the educational and social services in the economic reality of post-Katrina New Orleans.

2. The need to provide quality education and attract an even higher quality of faculty so education can continue forward is a challenge in post-Katrina New Orleans. At the same time, we have the opportunity to strengthen the overall educational system and contribute to the common good.

We can do this by forging greater partnerships between public and private education; these partnerships grounded in the common desire to serve the good of the community and a willingness to think in new ways. The old divisions that have too long divided us must be laid aside so we can move forward together. These old divisions include public and private, sacred and secular, and those who work for social justice and those who are strict individualists and isolationists. What is required is the ability to think and act in new and bold ways.

There is no later or more convenient time for us to seize this opportunity to move forward effectively and efficiently for the common good of the community and put-

ting children first. Leaders in ALL walks of life must come forward in order to contribute to the common good. With God's grace we can build toward what Dr. Martin Luther King calls, "the beloved community".

Thank you for your time and all of your efforts on behalf of Louisiana and the entire country.

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Chairman McKEON. Thank you.  
Mr. Nelson?

**STATEMENT OF JIM NELSON, SUPERINTENDENT,  
RICHARDSON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Mr. NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning.

I am honored to be here with my colleagues from Louisiana. I feel somewhat diminished by what they have been through. I am just honored and pleased that my district and districts like mine throughout the state of Texas have been able to pitch in and help a lot of the families and students that have come our way.

Mr. Johnson told you a little bit about our district. We are a suburban-urban district sitting in Dallas County. About half of our kids have qualified for pre-reduced lunch. We are a richly diverse district with over nearly two-thirds of our district being of one ethnic minority or another. We speak some 93 languages and dialects, and to be honest, I didn't know there were that many languages and dialects. But it is a great place to be.

Beginning almost a day after Katrina hit the coast, we began seeing families coming our way, some of whom left even, I guess, before the storm arrived. And in our lack of wisdom, we thought that maybe before it was over with, we would see a hundred or so children in our district. Well, that was the first couple of days, and it just continued like that over the next 30 days. So as Mr. Johnson indicated, by probably the first of October or so, we had actually processed over 1,500 kids and actually enrolled some 1,200.

We abut against other major districts. Dallas is just to our south. Garland, which is a big 55,000 student district, is just to our east. Plano, another 50,000, 60,000, or 70,000 kids is just to our north. So they have a lot of opportunities in lots of places, but our district happens to have a lot of motel and hotel space and a lot of apartments that had some occupancy availability, and that is where a lot of these families came.

Texas, as he indicated overall, I think at some point had over 40,000 of these students, and now, it is somewhere in the mid-30's. And much of the success we have had in assimilating these children and their families has been due to volunteers. And I would really be remiss if I didn't publicly thank them.

In our own situation, the PTAs, the faith-based communities, other volunteer organizations in our community really stepped forward to help with things like school supplies, clothing, food, shelter.

Many of these families came to us, as they certainly know, with very little of their possessions. They may have come in multiple families in one or more vehicles, or they came in buses and had very little. And so the community really stepped forward to help and try to get these children in situations where they could have at least some semblance of normalcy.

I want to quickly address a couple of issues that I hope—to inform you of one and hope you will help on the other. First is academics. Dr. Cowen mentioned the Orleans Parish schools as not being of the highest quality. Probably most of the kids that came to Richardson ISD—and this is probably true in my other school districts—came from Orleans Parish.

We immediately gave them, especially at the elementary level, reading assessments. And at the secondary schools, they did a variety of other things and found that, for the most part, they were 2, 3, 4 and sometimes even more years behind academically.

To say that puts stress on our system is an understatement, whether it is from the counseling standpoint, whether it was trying to bring more teachers in, more tutors, doing after school kinds of things, just a wide variety of things to try to get these youngsters a fighting chance academically has been a tremendous struggle.

We found the first semester at the secondary level that most of these students failed most of their courses. And so we are having to spend an enormous amount of time and resources and efforts to get them where they can be successful.

Ultimately, we believe many of these students—we still have nearly 800—will stay with us. We are estimating we will probably have over 600 come next fall, and if that is true, then I suspect they are probably relatively permanent residents at that point in time.

And they are going to have to do the kinds of things that every Texas student has to do in order to graduate from high school. They are going to have to pass all of our exit tests. They are going to have to take the recommended high school plan, which is a rigorous college prep curriculum in order to get Texas diplomas, and it is going to be very, very hard to accomplish that.

One of the other signs immediately that we have just seen in the last few days is some of the academic stress. We have recently got the results back from our 5th grade math assessment. At the state level, 81 percent of Texas 5th graders passed, 45 percent of the Katrina kids passed.

In my own district, it was some 87 percent and 55 percent. So I think that certainly is an indicator at a very young age that these children are—many of them are quite far behind, and it is going to take a lot of effort to get them where they need to be.

What I have been most impressed with from my limited perspective there in Richardson has been the commitment of my staff, of the teachers, the principals, and everybody else at the building level that has worked so hard to try to help these children succeed.

I know our district is probably, in the metroplex at least, is a good example of what is gone on. In the Houston area that Mr. Brady presents, many of those districts had far greater numbers of students come into their schools, and their superintendents tell me that they are seeing the exact same thing from the standpoint of academics.

We appreciate the resources that have been produced so far, but our biggest concern is that it is going to be a onetime thing, to be quite honest. And we certainly hope that the continuing needs over time will be addressed. The money has now flowed to the state

agency, and finally, the agency is releasing it this week, the first payment.

And so we can reimburse ourselves for a lot of the extra expenses that we have incurred over the last 6 or 8 months. And I really think that is more of a state issue, but I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity for a free shot. But in any event, we did get word we get a draw down this week, so hopefully.

But even then, we were first told it was going to be \$6,000 for regular ed kids and \$7,500 for special ed kids, and it is going to be somewhere between \$3,000 and \$4,000. So, you know, resources are an issue.

So I will stop there. I see I am over my time but thank you for the opportunity. I look forward to answering any of your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Nelson follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Jim Nelson, Superintendent of Schools, Richardson Independent School District**

Richardson Independent School District began school in August last summer with approximately 34,000 students on 55 campuses. We are an urban/suburban district comprising approximately 38.5 square miles in the northern part of Dallas County, Texas. Our students reside in one of three cities: Dallas, Richardson, or Garland. We are a richly diverse district with a student enrollment of approximately 35% White, 27% African American, 30% Hispanic, and 8% Asian/Pacific Islander. There are some 93 languages and dialects spoken in the district. One-half of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

On August 29, Katrina struck Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Almost immediately we began receiving inquiries from displaced families about the possibility of enrolling their children in RISD schools. As the magnitude of the migration of people became apparent, we assigned our Executive Director of Student Services (who also oversees secondary school operations) and one of our Elementary Executive Directors to oversee the process of receiving these students.

We initially estimated that we would receive 100 or so students. We grossly miscalculated. Over the next few weeks, we processed nearly 1,500 students, and actually enrolled nearly 1,200. This amounted to a 3% increase in our student population in a matter of weeks. This increase was the highest by percentage of any district in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, but was significantly lower than the increases seen in some Houston area districts. Throughout the fall we stayed in regular communication with other affected districts across the state.

These students came to our district for several reasons:

- Recommendations from Texas friends and relatives
- High concentration of available housing (apartments & hotels), along our
- Richardson-Dallas border
- Our cities' open arms policy welcoming the displaced families
- Our district's reputation for quality education

Our first step was to send displaced families right to our Student Services Department where they were counseled on how to enroll in the nearest school that had room for them. We didn't separate families, and we attempted to make the transition as easy as possible. Many children came with literally nothing: no extra clothes, no backpacks and certainly no school supplies. Our regular students, our PTAs and our community (in particular the faith-based community) and businesses were quick to respond with appropriate clothes and supplies. We tried extremely hard to assign students to existing classrooms, but it quickly became apparent that we would need some new sections at several of our secondary schools, and would need to open a few new classrooms at the elementary level. Also, it was necessary to hire certified teachers to assist in the elementary grades because many of the students were significantly behind academically. Where possible, we gave existing teachers support by bringing in newly hired teachers to work inside existing classrooms. We believed this would be far less disruptive to our schools than shuffling students this far into the semester.

Each of the displaced students had their own stories. Some had left their homes early enough to have saved some of their possessions, were staying with friends, and thus had some semblance of normalcy. Most however, lost most of their belongings, were uncertain of their future, and were forced to live in motels and hotels for

weeks on end. This put enormous responsibility on the school community, from teachers to principals to counselors.

Secretary Spellings, an old friend from Texas, frequently told a story about an elementary student who came to Texas. She heard that story from me, so I feel I can relate it here. A kindergarten student from New Orleans had been with us less than a week when his entire class was being led to another room in the building for music, and half way there he ran back into his classroom. When the teacher caught up with him he was at his desk, pulling out his backpack and all his supplies.

The teacher told him he didn't need to take his things with him, because they would be right back and his new backpack and papers and pencils would still be there. He looked up at her with tears in his eyes and said, "Teacher, these days we really don't know that for sure, do we?" Our counseling teams did double duty as we worked to assimilate these students into our group, assisting them not only with physical and academic needs, but with emotional needs as well.

After the next hurricane, Rita, devastated the coast, we had a fairly brief influx of students from South Texas and Louisiana. Many of these families were housed in a shelter provided by the City of Richardson. This center is adjacent to one of our middle schools, which we opened to the families for their use. They showered in our locker rooms, ate in our cafeteria, and the children were able to play in our gymnasiums. We experienced no problems and the families were grateful for the shelter. Most of these families returned to their homes within days or weeks of the storm.

In January, our Katrina numbers started to drop, as some residents returned to New Orleans. But many have chosen to make new lives in Texas. Last week, our count of Katrina kids was 784. We have a hurricane displaced student who starred in a high school musical, one who had a special audition to be a part of the drill team for her senior year, and several who played sports. Many of them have chosen to take the rigorous TAKS tests in order to pursue a Texas high school diploma. Most of the displaced students who are seniors have chosen to take the Louisiana exit test given online. If successful, they will receive a Louisiana diploma when they graduate next month. A few hurricane-displaced seniors actually decided to take the Texas exit exams (there are four) and a few were successful. They will receive Texas diplomas.

As a general rule, most of the students were at an academic level at least two years behind our students, but most are making great strides in learning. Extra tutors have been brought in along with extra teacher aides. We are thankful that their scores on our annual assessment were used only as a measurement as to where they are, not as to how our district is faring. The preliminary results on the 3rd and 5th grade assessments indicate anywhere from a 20 to 30 percent difference in the scores of our displaced students and those who were already here. We applaud the Department of Education and the Texas Education Agency for not including these students for accountability purposes for the 2005-2006 school year. We do have concerns that they may be included next year even though many will still be far behind. Their progress should be measured and monitored against past performance, but we believe additional time will be necessary before they can be reasonably included in the increasingly strict state and federal accountability systems.

There have been obvious costs to our district and other Texas districts in assimilating these students. We are attaching a chart that shows our expense summary through April 7, 2006. We estimate that we have expended nearly \$3 million directly related to Katrina and Rita displaced students. We are expecting the first of four payments from the federal appropriation. The money flows through the state agency which has finally agreed that all of these funds should go to local districts rather than the state. Hopefully, we will see this first disbursement within days. In discussions with other districts, especially in the Houston area, many of them have an even more significant financial impact. This is especially true in districts that were growing at a fast rate and had very little space in existing classrooms. They have been required to retain far more additional staff.

In short, we adapted as they adapted to us. As a public school, we welcome any student who enters our doors, be they from another Texas district, from Louisiana or from a country on the other side of the world. Public means they are welcome and we work with each student to help them become individually successful. In many ways, I believe this was Texas public education's finest hour.

**RICHARDSON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
 [Katrina Expenses Summary for 2005–06 as of April 7, 2006]

	TEA		Region X		Total	
	Count	Amount	Count	Amount	Count	Amount
<b>Payroll Cost:</b>						
Support Staff: Secretary/Clerk .....	62	300,851.59	.....	.....	62	300,851.59
Counselor .....	58	202,899.86	.....	.....	58	202,899.86
Teacher .....	152	2,005,078.72	3	80,390.00	155	2,088,468.72
Aides .....	9	64,904.30	.....	.....	9	64,904.30
Total Payroll .....	281	2,576,734.47	3	80,390.00	284	2,657,124.47
<b>Other Expenses:</b>						
Transportation .....	.....	43,265.53	.....	.....	.....	43,265.53
Private School .....	.....	48,000.00	.....	.....	.....	48,000.00
Curricular material .....	.....	150,000.00	.....	.....	.....	150,000.00
Total Other Expenses .....	.....	241,265.53	.....	.....	.....	241,265.53
Grand Total .....	562	2,818,000.00	6	80,390.00	568	2,898,390.00

Chairman McKEON. I served on a school board, local school board for 9 years, and we had more problems with Sacramento than with Washington, so I am glad to see that is still—

Mr. NELSON. It is still more fun than practicing law was.

Chairman McKEON. Thank you.

Dr. Chance?

**STATEMENT OF DOUGLAS CHANCE, PH.D., SUPERINTENDENT,  
 CAMERON PARISH PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Mr. CHANCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. It is a pleasure to be here representing Cameron Parish Public Schools, the emerald of the state of Louisiana down in the southwest corner. We border the great state of Texas on the west and the lovely Gulf of Mexico to our south.

I would sort of move away from Cameron just for a moment and ask that you please hear Father Maestri in terms of his comments to you. I am not a Catholic by faith, but I would ask that you hear that partnership plea. It is vital. They do an excellent job.

Second, I would like for you to hear Superintendent Nelson's comments relative to more than a 1-year funding. The great state of Texas took in some 45,000 students. They have served Louisiana students well, and they have faced challenges as you have heard Mr. Nelson speak.

Again, Cameron Parish pre-Rita, pre-Katrina, we opened the 2005-2006 school session with great excitement: three new principals in six of our schools. We only serve 1,850 students. Within days after opening, we received between 4 and 5 percent of our population in Katrina students.

Unlike many other districts, our Katrina students were excellent. We would like to have them all back. Most of them say to us, "We run from Katrina. We have run from Rita. We are not interested in going back to the coast." But we would like to have them back. They were great students. We also understand some others had some great challenges.

I would like to share with you that Cameron is important to Louisiana. Cameron is important to the United States. We have the second largest all reserve, strategic all reserve in our parish. We have pipelines running from Cameron pumping energy all across the country. And we often say, if we turn the valves off, Boston gets cold in January. So education along the coast is critical, whether you are in St. Bernard or whether you are in Cameron on the southwest side of the state.

I am going to sort of change, since you heard so much this morning, and share to you that there are three points that I think that are critical for success, whether, as the chairman said to you, relative to catastrophe in California with an earthquake or catastrophic events along the coast or the Atlantic seaboard.

We were able to make 3 days after Rita destroyed 62 percent of our schools, damaged another 13 percent significantly, and caused \$6.5 million worth of repair needs in the remaining two schools.

We made an announcement very early on the morning of the 27th after Rita hit on the 24th. One, we would develop a calendar where all students in Cameron could attend school in Cameron; two, that all seniors could graduate from their respective schools, and that is important if you are a senior. And third, we would retain all of our employees for the rest of the 2005-2006 school session. That point develops stability, because in almost all school districts in Louisiana, the school district is the larger employer or the largest employer. So retaining our employees gave us a base for re-building.

The next point I would like to make is that what we are doing, we opened back 24 days after the school session. We opened on a platoon system starting at 7:30 in the morning running till 5. We were using two of the schools that remain. We bus from 60 miles away from two school districts over, because that is the closest place our people could find housing. We did not bus from Richardson. We did not bus from Houston. We did not bus from Memphis.

As of January 2nd of this year, 82 percent of our students were back because of that busing and because of that platoon system. Again, we developed that base of stability by keeping all of our people employed.

Are things working for us? Yes. The new state future business leader present for the state of Louisiana is from Cameron Parish. We have done well academically with literary rallies better than perhaps in years in the past, a new kind of energy. We do that because our people are self-reliant, they are hard working, and they play hard, and they are people of faith.

We are excited about what 2006-2007 is going to bring. We will operate four schools, and this is on the concept, Mr. Chairman, of coming back stronger. We will consolidate two schools into one. We will build to the new standards. And we believe that we will have a better educational system post-Rita than we had prior to Rita because we have learned a lot.

I would like to take a moment and go over my time and share seven points with you. With the entire FEMA business and all of that legislation—and you have done a great job with that legislation—we need clarity of services when a catastrophe strikes. We need consistency in the interpretation and the processing of those

services. We need a long-term assignment of FEMA personnel or other Federal agency personnel. We need to—and perhaps some legislation to say that the bid law from Texas and Louisiana, which is different, or California, be standard during that emergency period so that we don't have to go out for a 4-week advertisement for bids.

It takes too much time when I have an emergency. I lost four schools, and I called Baton Rouge and talked to the attorney general, and said, "I need to do this quick turnaround." He said, the emergency period is over. How could it possibly be over? It can't be over, but it is legally.

So we need some attention there, and I think that has to be Federal legislation. The sources which have been mentioned up and down the table and then our FEMA deadline. We thank the president and the Congress for extending that with clean up and New Orleans with clean up in Cameron. We need that extended if at all possible.

And then one of our great challenges is the time to thank people for the assistance they provided. We thank each of you who have visited. We thank President Bush for having visited. We thank so many people across the country, because your visits bring hope, your visits bring thoughts about the future.

And in closing, we want to say thank you to our concerned citizens starting up in Connecticut at Lyme, Old Lyme, Connecticut, people up there. David Fein, superintendent and his group have been awesome. All the way down to Ash Grove, Missouri, where Brenda Ellsworth is mayor, has been wonderful. On across to Oregon to Coos Bay in North Bend. Those folks have been wonderful to us. Liberty, Tennessee in Smithville, their students have just been generous to our kids, and all the way back to the neighborhood in Anandale, Oak Hill in Oakton, Virginia. People have been wonderful.

We thank Congressman Boustany, Congressman Jindal for their support, but we thank each of you who have visited, who have voted positively for aid to Katrina and to Rita victims.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Chance follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Douglas L. "Doug" Chance, Ph.D., Superintendent of Schools, Cameron Parish School Board**

The Cameron Parish School District is a small rural district bordering the State of Texas and the Gulf of Mexico. The parish seat is approximately 150 miles east of Houston, about 240 miles west of New Orleans, and 50 miles south of Lake Charles, Louisiana.

The 2005-2006 school year opened on August , 2005 with an atmosphere of excitement resulting from new school level leadership in three of the six schools that served approximately 1,850 students, a renewed focus on academic achievement and expectations, and new construction and facilities restoration.

Within a few days of the 2005-2006 school session beginning, each of the six schools in the district began receiving students from schools devastated by Hurricane Katrina. The communities of Cameron Parish made preparations to assist Katrina evacuees, and in the evenings, the school system assisted evacuees by transporting them to school sites for the purposes of using washing machines, dryers, showers, and recreational facilities.

*Hurricane Rita's Destruction*

In less than a month after Hurricane Katrina devastated communities and school districts from New Orleans to Mobile on Monday, August 29, 2005, the citizens of

Cameron Parish began evacuating ahead of a Category Five storm named Hurricane Rita that was predicted to make landfall between Houston and Galveston, Texas.

The storm changed course! In the early morning hours of September 24, 2005, Hurricane Rita made landfall in Cameron Parish, Louisiana and Sabine Pass, Texas; however, the winds and water from Hurricane Rita impacted schools and communities some 200 miles to the east of Cameron and Sabine Pass.

In Cameron Parish, Hurricane Rita destroyed 62% of all school facilities, significantly damaged another 13%, and created the need for repair on the remaining 25%. Rita totally destroyed three schools, a central office administration complex, a central warehousing facility, significantly damaged a fourth school, and created the need for major repair at the remaining two schools.

Hurricane Rita totally destroyed Cameron Elementary, grades PK-7; South Cameron Elementary, grades K-7; and, South Cameron High, grades 8-12. Johnson Bayou High School, grades K-12, was significantly damaged, but the buildings were left standing.

#### *Assessment and Announcements*

In the early morning hours of September 27, 2005, only three days after the eyewall of Hurricane Rita began coming ashore, damages to school facilities were assessed.

In the midst of the destruction to schools and supporting facilities, and only three days after Hurricane Rita's landfall, a three-point announcement regarding Cameron Parish Schools was made to local, state, and national media. The three point announcement stated: (1) A school calendar would be adopted to permit all Cameron Parish students to complete the 2005-2006 school year in Cameron Parish; (2) High school seniors would be able to graduate from their respective schools; and, (3) All employees would be retained for the 2005-2006 school year, i.e., no reduction in force.

#### *Classes Resumed Only 24 Instructional Days After Rita*

Classroom space and the cafeterias at Grand Lake High and Hackberry High were released for occupancy by health inspectors prior to the last week in October 2005; subsequently, students, parents, and school employees met on October 25 and 27, 2005 in order to prepare for classes on October 31, 2005.

Instruction resumed only 24 teaching days after Hurricane Rita made landfall. A platoon system, a 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM school day, and an extensive busing plan with routes of 60 miles one-way were used as the corner stone elements in returning students to Cameron Parish. Students from Hackberry and Johnson Bayou attended in the restored Hackberry High School, and students from Cameron Elementary, South Cameron Elementary, South Cameron High, and Grand Lake High attended in the restored Grand Lake School.

#### *Academic, Co-Curricula, and Extra-Curricula Success*

Hurricane Rita interrupted and destroyed homes, schools, churches, and businesses in Cameron Parish. However, students, parents, teachers, and school patrons are hard working, resilient, and self-reliant at home and at school. This true American "can do" spirit permeates all of the school district as evidenced by student successes at literary rally, science and social studies competitions, a newly elected State President of FBLA, and two of four softball teams have earned semi-final berths in the State Softball Tournament.

These successes have occurred even with students attending on a modified schedule as well as sharing classrooms, textbooks, science labs, computers, gyms, and practice fields.

#### *Restoration of Schools and the Next School Year*

The Cameron Parish School Board will operate four school sites during the 2006-2007 school year.

Grand Lake Students in the Grand Lake Community will attend classes on a regular schedule using the facilities of Grand Lake High School, grades K-12.

Hackberry Students in the Hackberry Community will attend classes on a regular schedule using the facilities of Hackberry High School, grades K-12.

Johnson Bayou Students in the Johnson Bayou Community will attend classes in temporary portable classrooms located at the Johnson Bayou School site for most of the 2006-2007 school year while the permanent facilities are being restored. The cafeteria is scheduled for completion before August 17, 2006, and work in the gym is scheduled to be complete by October 1, 2006. Classrooms facilities should be completed in March 2007.

Cameron, Creole, and Grand Chenier Students in the Cameron, Creole, and Grand Chenier Communities will attend classes in temporary facilities located on

the former South Cameron High School site in Creole. These facilities will provide classrooms for students enrolled in grades PK-12 who previously attended Cameron Elementary, South Cameron Elementary, and South Cameron High School.

Construction plans for a new permanent PK-12 facility at the former site of South Cameron High School are being developed. New elevation, wind, and other construction codes will be adhered to in this new building, and it is being developed to serve a consolidated population until such time as another elementary school is needed.

*Future Concepts for Johnson Bayou and South Cameron*

In order to further protect the restored and new facilities at Johnson Bayou and South Cameron High, a berm constructed around each of these facilities appears to be a plausible project. Since a project of this type would require more resources than the school district would have available, the concept will be advanced as a model project for the United States Corp of Engineers, FEMA, and others. A berm around each of these school sites would provide a sanctuary and command center on each side of the school district to be used before, during, and after another threat from the Gulf, not only for the management of the school district, but available to the needs of the entire parish, as well.

*Challenges*

The major "storm-related challenges" faced by administrators in Cameron Parish School involve: (1) Clarity of services available; (2) Consistency in the interpretation of services available and ensuing processes and procedures; (3) The lack of long-term assignments of FEMA and other personnel; (4) Duration of 'Emergency Period' for receiving quotes in lieu of advertised bids; (5) Resources; (6) FEMA deadline of June 30th for reimbursement of expenses delayed by circumstances beyond our control, i.e., debris cleanup; and, (7) Time to express appreciation to the people providing assistance to the school system.

*Celebrations*

Students, parents, employees, and citizens of Cameron Parish have many things to celebrate in the Post-Hurricane Rita environment. We celebrate assistance through:

- Visits by President George W. Bush and former President Bush;
- Visits by Members of the United State Senate and United States Congress;
- Visits by Governor Blanco and Louisiana's Senators and Representatives;
- Visits by Chairman Don Powell, FEMA staff, US Army Corp, and Homeland Security;
- State Superintendent of Education Picard and Members of the State Board of Education;
- Electrical restoration personnel from across the United States, the Alabama and Other National Guard Units, and Law Enforcement Officers from across the country;
- Concerned citizens, businesses, industries, and partners from Lyme-Old Lyme, Connecticut to Ash Grove, Missouri and from Coos Bay and North Bend, Oregon to Liberty, Tennessee and back to Annandale, Oak Hill and Oakton, Virginia; and,
- Our students, parents, patrons, and school board members of Cameron Parish as well as our Congressman, the Honorable Charles Boustany, Jr., of Louisiana's 7th District.

Thank you.

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Chairman McKEON. Thank you.  
Ms. Voitier?

**STATEMENT OF DORIS VOITIER, SUPERINTENDENT, ST.  
BERNARD PARISH PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Ms. VOITIER. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. I am both honored and humbled to the invitation to share our story with you this morning, and I surely believe that ours is one worth telling and one that will hopefully bring you to a better understanding of the struggles we face each and every day in re-building our school system from its devastation at the hands of Hurricane Katrina.

I would ask that you not paint the St. Bernard Parish Public School system with the same broad brush with which many public school systems are painted today. Ours was a public school system that worked.

Prior to Katrina, our students scored at or above the national averages on all standardized tests, and all of our schools achieved adequate yearly progress under NCLB. We enjoyed the district-wide discipline and standard dress policy that made our schools and learning environments safe and effective arenas for learning.

Ours was the first school system in the state of Louisiana to have each and every one of its schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and we were set on October 16, 2005, we were prime to host a committee of educators from throughout the country to pursue the procedures district-wide accreditation. That had to be postponed because of the hurricane, but we are hopeful that we will be able to achieve that accreditation in the near future.

And ours was a system that was known for its financial stability and fiscal integrity. We had, for the last 15-plus years, received annual audits that were without exception no question called, not having received during that time even one adjusting entry nor management letter with suggestions for improvement.

We had received the procedures as—GFO, certificates for excellence in financial reporting. We were, by anyone's standard, considered a forward-moving, successful public school system.

Katrina devastated our schools and our community. In fact St. Bernard Parish was the only parish totally destroyed by Katrina. Others had pockets of normalcy. Ours had none. Every school, every home, every church, every business in our community suffered massive damage from Katrina's hands. And the storm turned a very close-knit, hard-working, middle-class community of 68,000 people literally upside down.

Prior to Katrina, our school system was the largest employer in our parish. It offered education at 15 school sites to over 8,800 students. And we were the first school system also in the state to offer universal 4-year-old program where we combine Head Start funds, the LA 4 funding, our tobacco settlement money, and then we put in district money for those students who didn't qualify economically so that there would be a tuition-free 4-year-old program for all our students.

But on August 29th, the footprint of our district would change for quite sometime to come and perhaps forever. Our buildings were damaged, many beyond repair, and our 1,200 employees were suddenly jobless, the vast majority of them homeless. The devastation in terms of building an emotional toll on a very good decent people beyond descriptors.

And I would like to thank and applaud our congressman, Charlie Melancon, for doing an outstanding job and offering help and ongoing support. And I would like to thank Congressman Miller and Scott and Tierney, Payne and Congresswoman McCollum for visiting and spending time in our school system learning and seeing firsthand what our situation is.

The first lady came to visit. She was warm and gracious and offered help. And I would also like to thank Congressmen Jindal and Boustany for their help in securing additional funding.

We have been the caretakers historically in our community for our people. Any time a storm comes, we are the entity that opens refuges and shelters of last resort. The Red Cross does nothing for us prior to or during the storm because of their national directive.

Once we completed that role where we stayed there during the storm and helped our people, we left, we set up headquarters in Baton Rouge, we sent records of our students everywhere. We had it backed up on our computer data base, and we were able to pay our people.

Within 1 week, we had gotten a computer system up and running with something on loan from the Unisys Corporation when I called the CEO from Blue Bell, Pennsylvania. So we were up and running 4 days after the storm hit.

However, I won't, I guess, detail all the trials and tribulations that we suffered with FEMA. It was an education strike force set up, and they fought over us as to who was in control. Was it the education strike force from FEMA, or was it the local assistance at the parish level? We have been through several different project officers. It has been a nightmare working through that bureaucracy.

We forged ahead without help from our state or local government or Federal Government, locating on our own portable classrooms and housing our people in trailers. We opened 11 weeks after the storm hit on November 14th to 334 students in portable buildings.

The day before Christmas, we had 640. At the start of the second semester, 1,500, and now we have 2,330 students back on one campus, over 25 percent of our enrollment. We opened without help, and we are hoping to get reimbursement.

I won't go through my lengthy remarks. Let me just skip to basically what we are asking at this point from this committee. When FEMA comes down, they should have a plan in place to restore essential parish services as well as education and health. That did not occur in our parish.

We are looking for stability also of personnel, as Dr. Chance mentioned. That did not occur in our parish. In terms of the appropriations for the community disaster loan, we have applied and received and are receiving those funds, but we are distressed with the prohibition on construction costs to use those particular funds.

We are also distressed that in legislation, there is no mechanism to where these loans could possibly, at one point, be forgiven rather than paying back. And we understand that this is the first time in the history of this legislation that that has occurred, that these loans have no possibility of being forgiven. So we would ask that you reassess and look at that particular piece of legislation.

The restart money, we are somewhat perplexed as to how we are going to utilize those moneys. We have been told that it cannot be used for the 10 percent FEMA match, nor can it supplant FEMA monies. So I cannot use restart monies to buy one piece of instructional materials or supplies. I cannot buy a textbook, a library book, band instruments, music or anything of instructional nature that we had prior to the storm with the restart monies, because if FEMA pays the 90 percent, I cannot come up with the 10 percent

using these monies, and then I cannot tell FEMA, don't use the 90 percent on it, we will pay these, we will pay for it with this 100 percent, because that would be supplanting those funds. So I have no way of using these monies for instructional MNS that we had prior to the storm.

And I would ask you to reevaluate that, at least for those severely impacted school districts whose local tax basis have been totally destroyed as ours was.

We have very little sales taxes, because most businesses have not reopened, and our property tax base has been totally diminished. We have two major oil refineries in our parish. And we have the second largest sugar refinery in the world in Domino Sugar in our parish, so we feel that we are coming back, we are on the road to recovery. The educational system is going to be what spurs our students coming back into our parish.

And let me just close by showing you four reasons why we are asking for your help in this recovery effort and the freeing up these funds to provide us more flexibility in their utilization.

This is Mitch. Mitch is a 3-year-old who is in our school system right now. He wants to grow up to be a policeman like his father. Mitch begins every phrase when he talks to his teacher, "Is it under the water, or can I use a crayon to color this picture?" Every phrase for at least the first 6 months started with, "Is it under the water?"

This young lady is Theresa. She is a 5th grade student, straight A student, our 5th grade student of the year. She too lives in a FEMA trailer, an 8-by-29 trailer, with her mother, her father, her sister and two golden retrievers.

This is Craig. Craig is a 7th grade academically gifted student in our community. His future is limitless. It is only limited by his ability to dream. And we are here to see that we remove those limitations from him. We are here to see that this young man realizes his full potential. He wants to be an attorney when he grows up, at least at this point in his life.

This is Brandy. Brandy is one of our 12th graders. Her entire year, senior year, has been destroyed by this storm. Brandy recently won the state individual dance competition, which means she is the best young dancer in Louisiana. She will be graduating in May and heading off to college.

Brandy is living with relatives in a neighboring community so that she can remain in the area and drive into school each and every day, because she wants to be back in St. Bernard Parish and finish school with us.

So I would respectfully ask that you help us to educate these young children, release some of these monies, grant us more flexibility.

Thank you very much for all of your efforts to this point, and may God bless you for caring.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Voitier follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Doris Voitier, Superintendent of Schools, St. Bernard Parish**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am both honored and humbled for the invitation to share our story with you this morning. I sincerely believe that ours is one worth telling and one that will bring you to a better understanding of the struggles

we face each day in rebuilding our school system from its devastation at the hands of Hurricane Katrina.

I would begin by asking that you not paint the St. Bernard Parish Public Schools with the same broad brush with which many public school systems are painted today. Ours was a public school system that worked. Prior to Katrina, our students scored at or above national averages on standardized tests; we enjoyed a district-wide discipline and student dress standard that made our schools safe and effective arenas for learning; ours was the first school system in the state of Louisiana to see each and every one of its schools accredited by the independent Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS); and, ours was a system that was known for its financial stability and fiscal integrity. We had, for the past 15+ years, received annual audits that were without exception, with no questioned costs, not having received, during that time, even one adjusting entry or a management letter with recommendations for improvement over internal controls. And I must say that because of the efforts of the members of the St. Bernard Parish School Board and its administrative staff and through the support of the residents of St. Bernard Parish, we were a financially healthy district and able to survive the challenges of the past nearly eight months.

Katrina devastated our school and our community. In fact, St. Bernard Parish was the only parish totally destroyed by the storm. All others had pockets of normalcy; ours had none. Every school, every home, every church, every business in our community suffered massive damage at Katrina's hands, and the storm turned a very close-knit, hard-working, middle class community of 68,000 literally upside down.

Prior to Katrina, our school district offered 15 school sites to 8,800 students in our parish. We were one of the very few in the state to offer our residents a universal four-year-old program and an additional 3-year-old component of a very popular and successful Head Start program.

But on August 29th, the footprint of our district would change for quite some time to come and, perhaps, forever. Our school buildings were severely damaged—many beyond repair—and our 1200 employees were suddenly without jobs and the vast majority of them were homeless. The devastation in terms of buildings and emotional toll on very good, decent people is beyond descriptors. And I would like to applaud our congressman, Charlie Melancon, for his ongoing support, and Congressmen Miller, Scott, Tierney, Payne, and Congresswoman McCollum for spending time in our school district and learning first-hand of our trials and struggles. I think that they would agree that our devastation is beyond words.

Nonetheless, ours is a district that has always been and remains focused and has always operated and continues to operate with an eye toward a better tomorrow. By September 1st, just four days after Katrina made landfall, we were opening temporary offices in Baton Rouge through the assistance of Louisiana State Schools Superintendent Cecil Picard. We were determined to stage a comeback despite our total destruction.

Within one week, we were operating with a borrowed computer system on loan from our vendor, preparing to issue a payroll, contacting employees through borrowed Internet space, and providing student records to parents. Admittedly, we were in a state of professional and personal shock, but our focus was clear—the re-opening of the St. Bernard Parish Public Schools.

By mid-October it became obvious that first responders, refinery workers, and essential parish employees were returning their families to live with them as they began the work of dealing with the crisis in our community. Our promise was to be open and operational when the children returned. In September, we had begun discussions with the FEMA Educational Strike Force (the first of its kind in any disaster and the promised answer to a quick rebound) about the cleaning and recovery of our buildings and about the need for temporary housing for our school's essential staff. But as our discussions progressed, it became more than clear that we were on our own. Portable buildings for schools were, through the Army Corps of Engineers, a possibility in March, which was an unacceptable date in our minds. Cleaning the muck, debris, and marsh remnants from our buildings was a task that would be ours. We were told that the National Guard would not do that type of work and the Army Corps of Engineers could not respond positively to our request for help. But we needed to open school—and the sooner the better.

So we forged ahead without help from the state or federal government, locating our own portable classrooms and housing trailers, securing our own national disaster clean-up team, and relying on our own people to salvage the very few materials that were undamaged on second-floor buildings, paying them with our district's own dollars, as we were told that the Stafford Act would not allow us to hire our

own people. Again, had we not been financially healthy, I am not sure that we would yet be open.

But open we did. On November 14th, just 11 weeks after the storm, we opened to 334 students, and by December we had doubled in enrollment. At the start of the second semester, we numbered 1500 students, and today we are at 2330 and continuing to grow. We built it and they came—parents brought their children because for those children, our school represented hope for a normal tomorrow, and for our community, the returning children offered hope for the future. St. Bernard Parish could not die.

To detail the struggle would take more than the brief time I have been allotted. However, allow me to respectfully review some thought on federal actions since Katrina's landfall.

First, there needs to be, for the future, a plan in place to immediately restore education, health, and essential public services to any community in this country devastated by a disaster. The best projection by FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers was 4-6 months for a school and 3-4 months for housing for essential personnel. We did it on our own in 3 1/2 weeks.

We sincerely appreciate the efforts of Congress to provide us with dollars through the Community Disaster Loan; however, at the same time, we are dismayed—first because we cannot use these dollars for construction, and secondly because for the first time in the history of this country, the language in the legislation for those loans prohibits forgiveness of the loans with the possibility of them becoming grants. The last time I studied geography, Louisiana was still part of this country, and I certainly feel that our community deserves the same treatment as foreign countries enjoy as their schools, hospitals, and infrastructures are rebuilt by this federal government gratis because of a recognized humanitarian obligation to restore essential services.

We are most appreciative of the dollars provided by Congress for the restart of our school district and for assistance in addressing the needs of our displaced students. However, we remain perplexed about how best to use these dollars. Again, we cannot use them for reconstruction, which will be our biggest expenditure. We are faced with unpredictable property and sales tax revenue at best, and how we will raise the 10% required FEMA match needed for our rebuilding program is unclear at this point in time. Additionally, guidelines tell us that we may not use these dollars for the required 10% FEMA match for instructional materials and supplies—nor may we supplant any funds that FEMA would provide for replacing lost items. We still await guidance on that issue so that we may access these dollars appropriately.

We entered into a recovery mode back in September knowing that we would have the expertise and full force of the federal government behind our efforts. Now, almost eight months and many lessons in bureaucracy later, we have learned to stand on our own, hoping, at best, to be reimbursed at 90% for our efforts.

I understand that no one—not the authors of the Stafford Act and not the Senators and Representatives who have no real understanding of what we are up against unless they, too, have experienced the disappearance of an entire community—no one ever imagined or predicted a catastrophe of this magnitude. But for four reasons, we have to do a better job if, God forbid, it strikes in the form of tornadoes, an earthquake, or another flood in your community tomorrow.

The first reason is Mitch—Mitch is one of our three-year-olds who is living in a FEMA trailer and comes for our preschool program each day. Mitch wants to be a policeman like his dad when he grows up. This is Theresa. Theresa, who is a straight A student, was our 5th grade Student of the Year. She attends our one, unified school, and she, too lives in an 18' x 29' travel trailer with her mom, step-dad, sister, and two golden retrievers.

This is Craig. Craig is a 7th-grader who is academically gifted. His potential is limited only by his ability to dream, and we are trying our hardest to channel his abilities in a way that will benefit us all in the future. And this is Brandi. Brandi will be an honor graduate next month and then head off to college. She recently captured the state individual dance championship, meaning Brandi is the best young dancer in Louisiana. She drives in for school each day from a neighboring town because she so desperately wants to be back home.

These children deserve our best efforts. Do you have doubts about funding for a safer, more protected New Orleans? Do you have doubts about whether or not the stream of money to the Gulf Coast is warranted? Do you have doubts about whether or not the money will be used wisely and with integrity? These children should resolve all doubt because with or without federal assistance, they are back to school in St. Bernard Parish; they are thriving, and they are home. And we, together, must provide them a pathway back to normalcy.

So that is where we are, and why we acknowledge that appropriate and timely federal assistance is our greatest need. Will we return in August to a school district of 15 schools and 8,800 students? More likely, 2 or 3 schools and 3000 students. Will we return to a community of 68,000? More like a community of less than 20,000. What we have been through we wish upon no one—ever. The pictures only tell half of the story. No one has yet been able to photograph a broken heart.

We have a very, very long journey ahead of us. We began it with the first step—our one open and flourishing St. Bernard Unified School. We are now of the mindset that hard work, a can-do spirit and encouragement from individual people across the nation will help us along that journey. We are homeless and possession-less, but we are full of spirit. Thank you, thank you, and thank you again for anything that you may do. And may God bless you for caring.

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Chairman McKEON. Thank you very much.

This has been very enlightening sad stories, stories of hope.

Dr. Hughes, when the earthquake that I mentioned earlier hit Cal State University, Northridge was in my district, and they were devastated, and their president had just come to the school a couple of months before like you. And watching her rebuild that campus, bring in tents and set up tent cities, and it was just before school was supposed to start. It was amazing watching the rebuilding process.

Stories of, Dr. Chance, of trying to overcome some of the bureaucracy and move forward is some of your recommendations. One of the things that they did during the earthquake is they had three freeways in my area that crumbled, three big freeway overpasses, and they eliminated a lot of the regulations and rules and just cut through all the bureaucracy and let them work 24 hours a day, let them rebuild the process without going through all the permitting that they normally do. And they ended up paying a bonus to those people and got the freeways back in—all three of them back into operation in less than 6 months and did it cheaper than they would have normally done. And normally, it would have taken over 6 months just to do the permitting process. So, hopefully, we can address some of these concerns.

You know, when you hear the bureaucracy that you have to go through—I remember a meeting we had just a day after the earthquake, and we had all of the FEMA people and the state people, the Governor all in a room and decided to do whatever we could to overcome that kind of stuff.

And, I mean, the devastation wasn't anything like you suffered down there, but it was pretty traumatic, and they had just finished removing the last body out of an apartment house a couple of streets over, so it was pretty tough. But I know nothing compared to what you have gone through, but some of the same lessons we should learn from and not set ourselves up for these lessons again.

Listening to some of the statistics, you said that about 25 percent of your students are back.

Mr. Nelson said that he still has about half of the students. You are expecting about 600 in the fall. You started with about 1,200 and you say those 600 now are probably going to be permanent. I don't know how we are going to sort through all of this, how it is going to be done, where the Federal Government is going to continue to help to take care of students that are no longer there and not help students that are somewhere else. I don't know how it is all going to be worked through, and that is going to take some

time. But I sure hope that we can cut through some of the bureaucracy and just address the needs that are pressing right now.

We have a lot of people here, and don't think I am going to even ask a question. I will turn to Mr. Miller now.

Mr. MILLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you all for your testimony. I am going to try and split it.

Mr. Cowen, I am going to ask you first if you might put on your hat as the Bring New Orleans Back Education Committee, and just if you could quickly run through what you think the future is going to happen here with K through 12, and then maybe some of the findings of the committee on charter schools.

If you could do that in a couple of minutes, because I would like to go to Superintendent Voitier on her future there.

Mr. COWEN. Well, out of every great disaster comes an opportunity, and there is an opportunity to rebuild the Orleans Parish school system almost from a clean piece of paper. The most expedient way to reopen the school system itself has been through charter schools itself. We currently have 25 schools open, 20 of those are charter schools themselves.

And I think for the foreseeable future, we will see more and more charter schools reopen very, very quickly to handle our population. And I think the charter movement will be a component of the long-term vision and plan for the reopening of the school systems in New Orleans.

I think the key will be, though, is can you run a large or medium-scale school system all with charter schools? There is no example in the United States where that has been done before. As a matter of fact, the only example or the primary example where there has been a large percentage of charter schools is in Philadelphia, where they are about 25 percent.

So I see over the next 5 to 10 years that we will rebuild through the charter movement, and ultimately, they will have a combination of district run and charter schools itself. But the charter schools have proved invaluable right now.

The plan that we developed did call for starting out with charter schools and then forming those charter schools into what we call educational networks or clusters of schools so that you would have 8 to 10 schools that would be clustered together to almost form a mini-school system within a large school system itself.

This is a model that is being experimented with around the United States right now. The early results are very, very promising. And you can overcome a lot of the disadvantages of individual charters by creating these clusters, because they can have shared services, they can have sharing of best practices across those schools.

So we think we have an unusual opportunity right now. I think we are off to a good start. We only have 12,000 students in our school system right now of the 68,000 that were there before Katrina. I think that number will go up to about 30,000 this fall. And as I said in my testimony, I think the single biggest issue right now is: Will we have the physical facilities available to house those children when they come back?

Mr. MILLER. Thank you.

Superintendent Voitier, if I might, you have successfully opened your school. You now have 2,500 students on campus. Can you describe what you think are the impediments that you are encountering in trying to get a second campus?

Because, as I understood it when we visited with you, they were relating some of your activities in opening the first campus, and perhaps they weren't going to be as helpful, or you are going to pay some price for taking some initiative on your own and trying to get these other campuses open.

I don't know if I am explaining it right, but I am sure you can.

Ms. VOITIER. Cash flow is a tremendous problem for us. In the short term, we have virtually no local tax base, as we talked about before. The businesses are slowly—we have no grocery store, no major grocery store that has opened. Post office just opened in a trailer at the end of February. We had to drive a hundred miles roundtrip just to pick up mail.

So restaurants are not opened. We are slowly getting sandwich shops and those types of things. Walgreen's just opened the first pharmacy in our parish last month. So we are operating basically like a frontier town at this particular moment. But the importance of St. Bernard Parish is great in terms of the two oil refineries that are there and the sugar refinery. So we are coming back, and our parish people will come back.

Mr. MILLER. Where did you get the money for opening the other campuses?

Ms. VOITIER. The problem is—I am becoming blind to where the money is coming from, whether it is local, state or Federal monies. I am looking at it all as one pot. And I figure we will untangle it later at some point. We were a healthy school district prior to the storm. We were fiscally conservative, so I had some monies in reserve that I have used to front.

The insurance money is very slow in coming. The schools that we have that had flood insurance, we have gotten those monies in up front. We are fighting like everyone else with our property wind coverage that we had over \$100 million worth of insurance, and that has not materialized. We are in a fight right now into the wind versus flood issue.

So the money—that is what we are here begging for in terms of the restart monies that, hopefully, Congress will provide, which you have, and we are very appreciative for. But some of our major needs in terms of resupplying instructional materials and supplies were being hampered because of the prohibition in using this 10 percent for our FEMA match.

Mr. MILLER. Essentially, we have appropriated the money, but you find it is not useable when you get under the regulations or—

Ms. VOITIER. I cannot use it for anything that I had prior to the storm, because the 10 percent match is prohibited, and I can't pay a hundred percent of the cost, because I would then be supplanting the FEMA monies that will come in at 90 percent. So I cannot find from any source our local 10 percent match.

And I would ask that you look at maybe with the severity of how a district has been damaged with this prohibition of the 10 percent.

For severely damaged districts, if you could set up some criteria that you would allow some flexibility to use it as a match.

Mr. MILLER. If we could send some questions to you to follow up on this so that we could clarify that, I would appreciate it.

Thank you.

Chairman McKEON. Mr. Castle?

Mr. CASTLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In my visit to just Louisiana and New Orleans and Mr. Boustany's district, Erath, no less, among other places, I was struck by the fact that it is very different. It is probably different at your colleges, for example. It is different between parishes in Louisiana. The problems in Mississippi, the problems in Texas, which is an absorber of students, for example, are very different. And sometimes it is hard for us to understand and follow all of this.

And I would just, before I ask any questions, I would just encourage all of you, and particularly as you go back home, to encourage anyone down there to keep in touch with people in Washington, with our committee. And believe me, I can just tell you that I was so impressed by Mr. Boustany and Mr. Jindal and others—particularly Mr. Scott—who traveled all the way to Erath from New Orleans that day.

You know, the members of this committee really care about this. I think the Department of Education has actually done a much better job at a governmental level than most governmental agencies have in handling this situation.

But we need to know what your particular concerns are, because they can be vastly different 10 miles apart in terms of what your needs are, what regulatory issues are, whatever. Please feel free to stay in touch. Send letters to this committee, to Chairman McKeon or whatever. It is just very helpful for us to know so that we can continue to make the right decisions to try to help you, because that is really what we should be in this course. I would just like to make that pitch in general, if I could.

We had a meeting with the presidents of the colleges, and while you all weren't there, you had representatives there when we were there. And I was struck by those differences as well, as I indicated earlier. And I would imagine we have here two colleges which are quite a bit different in terms of financial ability, if I had to guess.

And I am very interested in how you are paying for your rebuilding, particularly, Dr Hughes, in your case. I don't know if you have much of an endowment or how you are handling it. Just from your testimony, I got the impression that your damage is perhaps greater than some of the other colleges even that we saw. And I would imagine that Tulane is probably in somewhat better shape, and nobody wants to give up everything they have either.

So I would be interested in hearing just how you are handling the funding of these things, if you could give me a rapid answer to that.

Ms. HUGHES. Thank you so much for asking that question. It is not atypical for an HBCU to have a very small endowment, as you well know. So our endowment will not enable us to do any bridging regarding the building crisis that we are facing.

We were fortunate, however, to have taken good care of our insurance planning, and so the insurance planning has taken us through the remediation, which was very expensive, because it took 7 or 8 months.

We now are leaning on our insurance to assist us with the construction process. It will only assist us up to a certain stage. We worked really, really hard to get support from Congress and to build our funds through endowments, including any philanthropic support that we can get.

We know that there is a sizable gap between all of that, and we are hoping that FEMA will enable us to address that.

Mr. CASTLE. I have got to go sort of quickly here, but are—you actually have received insurance proceeds then, is that correct, because in many instances, people in our institutions have not.

Ms. HUGHES. We are actually receiving some insurance as we go.

Mr. CASTLE. You have.

Ms. HUGHES. But what we are now beginning to see in the construction process is that that process is slowing down tremendously and will, of course, impede the pace of our construction and our recovery.

Mr. CASTLE. Exactly.

Ms. HUGHES. So we are now trying to address the gap that is there between the insurance company and FEMA.

Mr. CASTLE. Dr. Cowen, I assume Tulane is in a little bit better shape, but I am sure—

Mr. COWEN. Well, I would like to explain a little bit the kind of damage that Tulane University had. We have two major campuses in Orleans Parish. One is downtown, and that is our health science center, which is our school of medicine, our school of public health and tropical medicine, and our hospital. All of our buildings downtown were under water, and some of those buildings have not even reopened to this day. Our school of medicine is still at Baylor University of Texas and has not returned. So we had tremendous damage downtown.

Our hospital reopened February 14th. Only one of two hospitals is opened in Orleans Parish, and we could only open up 65 beds, because we don't have the staff to be able to staff that hospital. So extensive damage downtown in terms of what happened.

Our uptown campus, which is where everything else is, is 115 acres. Two-thirds of that campus was under water, and we had to remediate 84 buildings, which means we had to gut the basement and the first floor of every single one of those buildings in 4 months and pay for all of that without any insurance from FEMA, because we would not have been reopened.

And the third part of this is that we have lost close to \$100 million worth of research assets during this process, because the vast majority of our animals in the vivarium, all were lost during the storm itself, the specimens from our research. So the amount of property damage is extensive relative to our size.

There is a misnomer about the use of an endowment. An endowment is not really a source of funds, because if you look at our endowment, as well as others, the vast majority of endowments at universities are restricted and cannot be used for any purpose you want. So we have a \$900 million endowment but only \$60 million

of that is unrestricted. And you can only use it one time, because once you use it, it is gone, and it has other implications. So the endowment is not the source that you would think it is.

And then, of course, where have we been funding this? We went out and borrowed \$150 million in the fall. That reached our maximum borrowing limits, so we cannot borrow anymore. As I said, we have not received any money from FEMA. We have received some insurance money, but I suspect it will be another 3 to 7 years before we see anymore insurance money. So between borrowing whatever we have been able to raise in lines of credit is how we have been financing our property damage.

And, of course, each of our institutions had very severe operating losses. This year alone, I will have lost \$180 million worth of revenue on a \$750 million budget this year alone.

Mr. CASTLE. I realize my time is up, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to say to Mr. Nelson—Dr. Chance, I didn't have a chance to ask you a question, but you have both made very good points when you said this can't be a onetime thing. My judgment is this is going to go on for years, and we need to keep paying attention to it.

I would just like to thank Father Maestri. He was in a meeting that we had at Lusher Elementary School in New Orleans, and I was so impressed with the combined efforts of the Catholic schools and the public schools going into charter movement, everyone working together. And I just want to thank you for that.

I yield back.

Chairman McKEON. Thank you.

Ms. McCollum?

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Well, I think it becomes pretty clear from the testimony and from the opportunity that I had to see things firsthand when I was in Louisiana when schools, whether they are public, private, elementary, or secondary education systems, when they are not reopening, a city cannot start to recover. Parents don't want to move away from their children. They want to be working in their communities, they are building their communities, and they want their children to access schools. And the higher education institutions are going to be the future and the life blood of how Louisiana and Mississippi come back.

But Louisiana, in particular, I know we are focusing on today. So I just think that the statistics that you brought forward about Louisiana parish about 25 of 117 schools are open, and without having schools opening, the work force won't come back, students can't come back to attend higher education. There is no place for—to begin the reconstruction that needs to happen.

So I would like to kind of focus on repairs. And this is not beating up on FEMA. FEMA, we have all seen it work in our communities. We have floods in the Red River Valley in Minnesota. We have seen FEMA come in after tornados and severe disasters, but FEMA's never faced anything of this magnitude. And I think that the testimony being—that was submitted today, FEMA's deadline for temporary repairs ends June 30th. They have never in their life had anything like this to be looking at with such a magnitude of the numbers of institutions, homes and businesses that have been destroyed.

Now, the other thing that we need to be mindful of is FEMA has to be gearing up for the next set of hurricanes in your area. And so we need a new plan in which FEMA can go back to getting ready for the next disaster. Unfortunately, we know that they will happen. And we need a plan in place to allow you to move forward with recovery, and that is the missing piece here. Where is the plan to move forward?

So if I could maybe ask kind of the general statement. As you are opening schools, and as we are seeing trailers for housing start to come in, where has been the discussion for children for healthy neighborhoods? The neighborhoods that I saw don't allow for children to be playing safely in. There is no structured day care provision that is in there. And so the schools are going to be looked at to kind of provide some of that. I would think this summer there is going to be pressure to do that.

So who is helping the school system address physical health and environmental health with the higher education institutions not being able to function for you to normally go to that? And what is moving forward for that to take place?

And then I just want to raise another concern that I have. Here we saw at St. Bernard Parish good old fashioned American ingenuity coming into play, something we like to say that we are so proud of. And yet the penalization that is happening at St. Bernard Parish for moving forward in a quick way.

What can you offer us to be looking at as we come up for the next phase, for the recovery phase, because we need to speed this up for you folks? And so what are some of the barriers that you see?

And then if I could just make for a comment. The fact that loan forgiveness is not included in this legislation when tax basis has been totally destroyed is unbelievable to me. We need to revisit that.

So I just—in a few minutes, some ideas or directions we should be looking at. Father, and then you, Superintendent, if you would please.

Father MAESTRI. Thank you for your question, especially in terms of housing.

The Archdiocese of New Orleans has just begun a massive multi-billion dollar program between private lenders, the archdiocese and resources, and various enterprise groups to formulate housing. The archdiocese operates a little over 2,000 housing units, and we are now developing a plan going forward that will provide housing, both low income, middle income, renting, as well as buying, working with the Federal Government, working with state agencies, and also with private lenders in order to make that happen.

We are very much committed, not only to education, and to the neighborhood, but also to schools, because they really go hand in hand together. And so this is something that the archdiocese is doing along with Catholic charities especially in providing psychological counseling and health care services, mental health services especially for families and children who are dealing with so much post-traumatic shock syndrome.

Ms. VOITIER. In the few short months since the storm, we have had to reevaluate our position as well. We have a rebuilding plan.

We realize the footprint of our community is going to drastically change, and so will the footprint of our school system. We have a plan for consolidation. We know which schools we are going to rebuild and to what extent and how we are going to react to the changing housing patterns within our community.

We are the ones offering a full summer program for our students. We had a 21st century grant that I am reapplying to the summer. I am looking at Title I monies, as well as any monies that I can scrounge from private foundations. So we are going to be charged with the task of providing educational, recreational services.

We have partnered with LSU School of Health and Allied Sciences to offer services for our students who are experiencing emotional problems.

What we really see is a tremendous need, if we are looking at the upcoming hurricane season, is not a repeat of what has happened to us in our community.

FEMA needs to have a plan, just as we have developed a plan for how we are going to proceed. There has got to be a plan in place that when they hit the ground that they have access to resources, that they can bring in portable classrooms immediately, that they can provide short-term health services and some essential city services immediately. We were told it would be 6 months, March, before they could put a portable classroom building school together for us. We did it in 3 1/2 weeks.

From mid-October to November 14, we put a school together locally. But the corps of engineers in FEMA could not do it, they told us, before March. So whatever their rules and regulations are that prohibit them from getting those services immediately to us, it has to be changed.

They should have contracts ready. They should have buildings ready to come in immediately and then step back and look to see how we can progress in maybe a more businesslike manner.

When we have to put a school together—you know, Doug mentioned over here the bid laws. Well, we have got to take real hard look at that. We have got to be wise stewards of the public money. But when there is no electricity, roads are almost impassable, where are you going to advertise for a month and get contractors to come in and walk your sites and do business?

You know, there has to be a provision for emergency services to proceed immediately. And that really has to come from the agency from our Federal Government who should be coming in with those resources, because the local agency at that point has been totally wiped out. So that is what we are looking for.

Ms. HUGHES. Senator McCollum, you have raised some very fundamental questions for us to think about in terms of longer-term planning. The recovery of New Orleans is very uneven depending on where you are. I am in the lower district, and of course, you know what the community is like in that district.

And so I view Dillard's responsibility as one of fundamentally moving and trying to give assistance to community recovery in whatever way it can. And so we have done some of that by inviting students from all over the country to come in during spring break, and they have been very resourceful and very active.

But our students also are very concerned about what they can do to assist the community to recover, because absent the community, even if the university were perfect, there is not a quality of life that is needed.

The university can provide some assistance with child care, for example, through the college of education, but it cannot provide all of it. So what your statement raises for me is the need for us to think about a really holistic approach using education as a catalyst to engage with the community and to search for ways to become partners in the recovery. I think that is going to be very, very essential for us.

Mr. COWEN. We are in the proverbial Catch-22 in New Orleans because of the interrelationship between our feelings about the safety of the levees, housing and neighborhoods, and education. And this is, of course, this triangle is making the education one even more difficult than it otherwise would be. Because as we try to reopen schools in Orleans Parish, we have to decide where to open those schools, for which children, at what grade level, and who will teach them.

And we also have at Orleans Parish that 102 of the 117 schools are controlled by the Louisiana Department of Education. The others are with the Orleans Parish school board.

And I have to give credit to both organizations. They are working very effectively and very hard to deal with an unbelievably complex situation down there.

One of the things that does seem to be working in Orleans Parish is this charter movement. And as an example, Tulane University has a charter school itself that we charter K through 12. And we work with every element of that school from helping house faculty to helping them with their shared services, to helping them fix their buildings. And there are many others in Orleans Parish that are doing the same thing with charter schools.

It is probably not the most efficient and effective way, but it clearly is the most expedient way right now to get these schools reopened.

Mr. BOUSTANY [presiding]. Before we move on, I would like to remind the members that we may have votes around 12:30, so let us try to keep to the 5-minute rule.

Ms. Biggert, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you all for your testimony.

It has been very moving, and I just can't imagine, you know, the problems that you have, but I think you are also positive and bring such hope for the future down there. Appreciate it. Just a couple of questions.

Mr. Nelson, you mentioned in your testimony that you are projecting about 600 students that will remain in your schools permanently. I just have a question about the NCLB and the testing. Do you think that that will be a large enough number that will affect the test in your school?

And how do you recommend in the testing to—of these students how would you plan to monitor and bring them along to the level of your—you have given some things, but are all those children participating in that?

Mr. NELSON. Thank you. That is an excellent question.

First of all, the 600 is at best an educated guess. That is kind of the number we have been working off of, but I think until August gets here and school starts, we really won't know for sure. But the fact that over the last few weeks, the number has stayed very stable—in fact, we have more children last week than we did the week before.

So I don't know whether some of our—they move around among apartments and that sort of thing, and I assume that is the difference, but it has been very stable in the high 700's for several weeks now, so you know, I am guessing, but I am guessing 600 or so.

Both the state and the department made a very wise decision to not include these students in the two—both either our state accountability system, which is quite rigorous, or the AYP NCLB system for this year. We have—we are treating these kids as a subpopulation. So we will know where they were—you know, day one and so along the time.

And it is my hope because of the day that we are getting out of that that I related to you on the math scores, for example, that both our state agency and the department will take a very common sense approach to addressing AYP and the state accountability. Otherwise, I think we are going to have some schools that are doing masterful jobs with children that come with significant academic deficits get punished, and I don't think anybody wants that to happen.

I think they need to—my recommendation is they look at a growth model, even though we don't use that in Texas, for these children at least for the short term. And as long as they are making academic progress that a school not be held not to meet AYP because of them. But there are enough of them, clearly, in my district. And in the Houston area, there has probably going to be far higher percentage state that they would have a significant impact from an accountability standpoint.

On that test I mentioned a moment ago, both at the state level and at the local level, they make a 1 percentage point just so that in my district, the limited number make a 1 percentage point difference on the total in terms of the passing rate. And they do the same for the state as well. So it is going to take time.

We are seeing some progress among a lot of these kids, and I hope they do stay. I think they are stable, they are good kids. The only complaint we have had that I told Dr. Chance is that our cafeteria food doesn't have enough spice in it. But they are great kids and great families, and we have enjoyed having them. But they—especially the ones from Orleans Parish do come with significant academic deficits.

Mrs. BIGGERT. So it sounds like you are seeing them assimilate in the families assimilate into the school system. Are they participating?

Mr. NELSON. For the most part, that is true. In fact, you go into classrooms, and teachers now have a hard time telling you which kids are Katrina kids, because they have just kind of become assimilated. I mean, we don't make them wear signs or anything, but—that they are from New Orleans. But—and so I couldn't tell

you as I go around which ones are which. I mean, obviously, we have them coded, because we did that for obvious reasons at the beginning. But they have, for the most part, blended in and become part of our culture and fabric of our district.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you.

And then, Dr. Cowen, I understand that right after Katrina that you—well, the school, you sent the students to other schools. In other words, you made sure that they were enrolled in other universities, other colleges after the hurricane?

Mr. COWEN. Yes. Shortly after the hurricane itself, we were able to arrange an agreement with virtually all the colleges and universities around the country to take the students from the Gulf Coast institutions, not just Tulane—all of our institutions. And we asked them to take them for one semester as visitors, and please return them back to our institutions.

And I have to say, if I look at one community in America that really has helped higher education, it has been the higher education community, so the Department of Education and the other colleges and universities.

In Tulane's case alone, our students went to 594 colleges and universities around the country in the fall.

Mrs. BIGGERT. I congratulate you on that. Are they coming back, I guess, now? Are your applications up?

Mr. COWEN. Well, it is interesting. We had a very—we had a phenomenal return rate of 88 percent of our full-time students, which was much higher than we predicted. And our applications for our undergraduate program are actually up 15 percent. We have 21,000 applications for 1,400 positions. But as I testified today, I cannot tell you whether we will get that class of 1,400.

You may ask, given that size of that applicant pool, but our students come from all over the United States, and we are having to combat with their parents the perception of what is going on in New Orleans. And the students that get accepted at Tulane University are getting accepted at the Ivy League schools in Vanderbilt and Emory. And fighting against that perception of New Orleans is a challenge unlike anything we have ever had before, and we are all realizing that same challenge.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Dr. Hughes?

Ms. HUGHES. I would simply like to add that the education community, I think, was very generous. In many instances, they exempt our students from any tuition and gave them very special privileges. My students were located all over the country, and a few were even internationally located. So we encourage that, because we wanted educational continuity.

We expected that since we couldn't return to our campus, we wouldn't attract a fourth of our students. However, we did attract 50 percent, about 51 percent back in spite of that. And we are hoping, also, that in the fall that we will be able to reattract a number of students. But the issue raised sooner about the communities and community service are really critical issues for us in our area.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Scott, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the ranking member, I would like to ask unanimous consent that we hold the record open to allow for members to ask additional questions, and also to have the gentlemen from New Jersey, Mr. Holt's, statement inserted into the record.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Without objection.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you.

And, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for your hospitality, as well as Mr. Jefferson and the others from the Louisiana delegation. I was there for several days and met with most of the panel, as a matter of fact. We have a lot of work to do, and I hope we can accomplish it.

Dr. Cowen, I just want to empathize the point on economic impact on economic development. You indicated that the reopening of Tulane caused the population to rise in that area. Did it have any effect on businesses in the area?

Mr. COWEN. Absolutely. As a matter of fact, many of the businesses in the areas in which we operate pegged their reopening until we opened, because without us opening up, there were no students, there were no faculty, no staff, so it had a tremendous impact on just small businesses, retailers primarily, and others reopening.

Mr. SCOTT. And what impact does it have on the community in terms of health care?

Mr. COWEN. Well, Tulane University is one of the largest health care providers down there, and this is one of our very significant problems right now, if I could say a few words about it.

As I mentioned, there are only three hospitals opened up right now in the parish. Tulane Hospital is one of them, and we only have 60 beds opened up to the 250-bed hospital downtown. And the reason we don't have more beds opened is because, quite honestly, we don't have the technicians and the nurses we need to open up more. But the vast majority of the patients we are even getting in that hospital are indigent care patients.

So we are already having financial problems. Now it gets exacerbated. What is also causing a problem is our residents. We have 550 residents. Those 550 residents are spread all over the United States. We are not getting reimbursement for those residents from those hospitals, because we have yet to get exemptions from DHSS—CMS on those exemptions.

So what is happening is we are reopening, but the more we reopen our health care, the more money we are actually losing, because we are subsidizing other agencies, both state and Federal, that would normally be paying for those services. And we have a tremendous crises of care for the indigent in New Orleans right now.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you. Now, if we appropriated money for higher education for New Orleans, some might think that we would spend half our time arguing about who would get what. What have you done to deal with that question?

Mr. COWEN. Well, we actually had an unprecedented arrangement occur in higher education. There has been money, as you know, some money appropriated. The state of Louisiana got \$95 million that was given to post-secondary education primarily for

those institutions that were closed 30 days or more. What we did is we got the chancellors and presidents of the 14 institutions together. Understanding we have everything from HBCUs to major research universities public and private, and the 14 of us agreed in an objective way to allocate that money among the institutions based on some real criteria.

This is unprecedented, because I don't think anybody ever thought we would be able to sit down and agree amongst ourselves, but we did agree. And the \$95 million, when we eventually received it—we have not received it yet—will be allocated primarily the way the colleges and the chancellors decided to do it.

Ms. HUGHES. May I just add that Katrina really did bring some good fortune to us. We have formed, for the first time, for example, a consortium, and Scott has really invited us to be a part of that consortium. Loyola and Xavier are a part of that consortium.

So what we see now is that Katrina has enabled us to understand that we can cross boundaries that before seemed to divide us. And we are really seriously building partnerships sitting around that table, making decisions about the \$95 million was very reassuring for me, because we had already built that kind of consortium.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you.

Ms. Voitier, where are your employees housed when these schools that are open?

Ms. VOITIER. We had to go out and purchase travel trailers on our own to house our staff. So we initially bought 82 travel trailers. I have got them in the parking lots of some of our schools that are not in operation at the moment. That is primarily where our faculty and staff are housed. If they were lucky enough in surrounding areas to move in with relatives or find a place to rent, they have done so, and they are driving in from surrounding areas as well.

Mr. SCOTT. My time is almost up. I wanted to ask one other question, and that is, in the construction you mentioned the problem of how you can replace certain equipment, and they would only—if you have a 12-year-old air-conditioning unit, can you tell the committee what problems occur as you try to rebuild?

Ms. VOITIER. When we were looking at restoring a permanent building for our students, Chalmette High School, which is our main high school in the parish, walked the building with FEMA representatives as we were trying to develop a project worksheet. And his statement to me was, we can only bring you back to pre-Katrina conditions. That is all we are allowed under the Stafford Act.

We were looking at the chiller and boiler systems. Our chiller system in that school was 12 years old. So his statement to me was, we can only pay 90 percent of the cost, replacing it with a 12-year-old chiller system. I said, well, where am I going to find a 12-year-old chiller system? And he said, well, I am a mechanical engineer, and I can get you one tomorrow.

I said, well, wait. That was the wrong question. I said, the real question is: Why would I put a 12-year-old chiller system in a school that we need to rebuild? And he said, well, ma'am, I am really sorry, but that is all I can do. My hands are tied. The cost

above 90 percent of what it would be to replace the 12-year-old chiller system, you will have to bear that entire cost.

So we are trying to work around that in very creative ways.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Brady, 5 minutes.

Mr. BRADY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I want to thank Chairman McKeon and the committee for allowing me to sit in today.

And, Chairman Boustany, thank you for your continued persistence and leadership as we try to resolve funding issues related to western Louisiana and east Texas as we deal with both the aftermath of Katrina and Rita.

I appreciate the committee too. This committee was the first to recognize the important role the schools played in our Katrina families. I know in the shelters we have in Texas, the day that the schools started to enroll students, the attitude in the shelters changed dramatically, provide a normalcy and a routine at a time when we desperately needed it. And this committee was the first to take a lead role in assisting the Congress reimburse schools for doing the right thing. And that is what I want to ask about today.

I know that, you know, 49 states opened their schools and classrooms to Katrina students in Texas and east Texas, especially. Our unique challenge has been as a neighboring county to Louisiana, we took in about 400,000 or more Katrina folks, about 40,000 students. Many of our schools were the shelters for them. And, in fact, that was the first challenge we had.

Second challenge was, in Hurricane Rita, that caused the largest evacuation—not in American history but world history—2.7 million people who streamed out of the Gulf Coast, ran out of fuel and food, and we reopened the shelters, many of them in schools, to help them.

And then our third hit in east Texas and in west Louisiana was Hurricane Rita itself, which, while Katrina was the sixth largest hurricane in Gulf Coast history, Hurricane Rita that followed was the fourth largest hurricane in Gulf Coast history, damaged or destroyed more than 75,000 homes. And we find ourselves in schools were knocked off for as much as 3 weeks out of the grid as well. And so we face some unique challenges.

My biggest concern today is that we are not funding schools adequately for the Katrina students that they are hosting today. Even though this committee authorized the higher number and Congress authorized a higher number, we have funded only about \$4,000 per student for our Katrina kids. And that is not nearly enough, especially given the fact that we want to bring these kids up to grade level just as quickly as possible. And we have not given much thought to how we will help fund these kids for next year, because many school districts operate, not principally with state money, but like in Texas, two-thirds of it is local money. And there isn't much there to do that.

And so my question to Mr. Nelson, who is a former TEA commissioner of education, school board member, school superintendent, in Texas in your school district, is \$4,000 enough to reimburse you to educate our Katrina kids?

Mr. NELSON. No.

Mr. BRADY. Is it anywhere close?

Mr. NELSON. You know, it is really difficult because of the academic issues, Mr. Brady, that I discussed both in my remarks and in response to a question. I think it is unlikely that it is going to be close. And I think every district, as you well know, in Texas is somewhat different. My district happens to be one of the property wealthy districts, even though we have a large number of poor children, which gives us some advantages, clearly, in trying to address their needs.

There are a lot of districts that are much closer to where you represent that are not property wealthy, that are also growing at a rapid rate, and they are going to have enormous difficulties meeting the needs of these Katrina students' academic concerns both confronting their own growth at the same time they try to do all the extra things that are going to be necessary to get these kids to where they have to be to meet both state standards and Federal standards. And I have not talked to a single superintendent who doesn't want to do that, isn't committed to doing that. But it is going to be very, very hard when you are looking at a onetime resource like this.

We have already accounted for—in my district's case, I think we are going to—we figure it is just under \$4,000 per student. It is going to come to a little over \$3 million. We have already expended that. I mean, we are going to basically—repaying ourselves for money already spent. And so to think, you know, what are you going to do next year and the year after in terms of trying to meet these students' needs, it is very difficult, you know. But in our case, we have to do it out of reserves or ask that the local taxpayers, assuming we get more taxing authority in the current special session going on in Austin, to address it that way. You know, I don't know.

But, you know, short answer, no, I do not believe it is sufficient, and so anything that Congress can do in terms of further appropriations is certainly going to be helpful.

Mr. BRADY. I think Congress that has authorized \$6,000 per student, which really doesn't meet some of the special needs.

Mr. NELSON. It is \$7,500 for special-ed children, the authorization was.

Mr. BRADY. And the president recently announced he was in support of the Congress paying the full \$6,000 for this student year, school year, which is almost over, by the way. And then congressmen have to grapple with how we help fund monies for next year.

And the question I want to ask I will submit in writing to you is, you know, what are you doing to help bring these kids up to grade level? Because I know in reading, some of the reading scores showed about one-third of 5th graders from the New Orleans Parish were reading at grade level, 5th grade. Two-thirds are already behind, can't read at grade level. You just can't let kids—you know, every school year is important to these kids, and you just can't—you got to bring them up to speed. It takes time, effort and resources. And I will submit that to you in writing, Mr. Nelson.

Again, to the committee, to Mr. Jefferson, to all those all who work on behalf of Katrina students, thanks for your support.

Mr. BOUSTANY. I would also add that this committee is working and continuing to work with the Department of Education to maxi-

mize flexibility and how money is used. So I wanted to offer that assurance.

At this time, Ms. Woolsey is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to particularly thank you, Superintendent Voitier, for your principled stand and all of you for pointing out to us what you are doing, you are doing with your hands tied by bureaucratic red tape and rigidity. But you know what? In spite of it, you are doing what needs to be done for the kids. And I think if you wanted to say one had a slogan up there on the witness stand, you would say it is the kids, stupid, but you wouldn't call us stupid, because that wouldn't work. So we can say it is the kids, exclamation mark.

So with the kids in mind, what would be your—I would like to start with you, Superintendent. What would be your three priorities that you would have asked of FEMA? And then go down the witnesses, and if you have different priorities or want to add to it, you know, that would be good, that you would have asked from FEMA during this disaster that didn't occur—what the disaster did but that FEMA didn't do what they are supposed to do.

Ms. VOITIER. The first thing we needed was some immediate fidelity and space, and to untie our hands from the bureaucratic—declare the emergency, either supply us with what we needed immediately or allow us to get it ourselves.

We talked about the building situation. They couldn't do it for several months. We located portable buildings in Georgia and in Carolina. We got them down there. We got local contractors, and we put a school together in 3 1/2 weeks.

We couldn't feed our children hot lunches because there was no gas. We had to—we cooked offsite and hauled food every day for 2 months, hot food. FEMA wanted me to feed them MREs and sandwiches, and I refused. And they would not help us in feeding our children.

So what I am looking—the first thing I would look for from a very short-term immediacy, get us space and help us to provide basic services to children.

Then, as these things are freed up and monies are appropriated, please give us the flexibility of spending those funds and judge us by the outcome. We are not afraid of accountability in any fashion whatsoever.

Mr. Nelson, I hope you get some of our kids, because they are going to help your scores not hurt your scores, our Katrina kids.

So we are a school district, as I said before, public school district that works. You know, our children did extremely well. We are known for our fiscal integrity and the way we handle money. Allow us to do that in a prudent manner and judge us on the outcome. So please, immediacy of help, flexibility in funds, and recognize that if—thirdly, if there is a severely impacted community as we were, cash-flow is vital.

There has got to be—and I think Congressman Miller mentioned it a little bit earlier—some advance funding with the accountability tied to it, because we don't always have the amount of money we need to get started on the front end. Insurance isn't going to do it. No other funding source is available, and the local tax base in our situation is destroyed, so some immediacy of cash-flow as well.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Dr. Chance?

Mr. CHANCE. Thank you, Congressman, and I appreciate your thoughts relative to focusing on children.

I think, in terms of bringing back the business, the FEMA effort and other support networks from the Federal level, but when you start focusing on children, things have to occur differently whether you are talking about restaurant facilities or cafeterias. And that unit is critical, I think, in that thought process.

Within the legislation, I know, support and recommend that we have good governance and accountability of the utilization of those funds. I think in a catastrophe, whether it is an earthquake in California or another storm in the Carolinas, that FEMA needs to be authorized to assess rapidly as we did in Cameron. We knew we lost Cameron High School. We had it insured at about \$9 million, what it was worth. To rebuild it to standards will run about \$16 million to \$17 million. To start that effort, we need to be able to start growing down that money.

I am fully insured. I have the tax base to raise that set of funds, but under the guidelines, if we could start growing down immediately, then I don't have to worry about that—passing that rate to do it. The reimbursement process needs some work in that area. And I think overall stability, the ability to draw in funds, stability of the FEMA personnel. I am not sure how many teams Doris has been through, but I have been through several.

The local level that we work with, we have worked with four gentlemen from FEMA and the corps that have been exemplary. They have been awesome, and I would use their names, but they have asked me not to. They have been marvelous, and they are a credit to all Federal agencies.

But the second layer up in terms of getting approval of their recommendation needs tremendous work. Thank you.

Ms. WOOLSEY. We have run out of time, so I would appreciate very much if you have other ideas if you could add them in writing. Thank you.

Thank you.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Payne, 5 minutes.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much.

And let me commend all of you for the outstanding work that you have done. Many of us on this committee are former educators. It was my first career and, actually, I think one that I enjoyed the most, actually. In a difficult inner city in Newark, New Jersey, awful lot of poverty, a lot of abject poverty and problems. And so I can really emulate and feel the situation in New Orleans.

Let me also say it is very good to see Superintendent Voitier again. We had an opportunity to—I was one of the persons, as you may recall, that visited your St. Bernard Parish and really was struck by the visit and going up to the second level and pointing out to us where the water was and conditions of people who needed oxygen. And there was, you know, no generators to keep things working.

And I just want to commend you for the take-charge attitude that you did. I mean, that is really regardless of what region of the country we are in, we, as Americans really step up to the plate

when the chips are against us. And I really commend you for what you have done.

And the others of you, I just haven't had the privilege to visit there.

I was going to ask you about the Leave No Child Behind, but I heard you mention briefly about the fact that your students were doing all right. But do you feel that had the Federal Government—will give you any leeway or any of the districts, or are you not asking for it, or what happens to the youngsters, because as we know, this testing is very important to the strong supporters of Leave No Child Behind. Are you given any kind of leeway?

Ms. VOITIER. With the standard accountability system, there are going to be some modifications for us in the short term. Prior to the storm all of our schools met adequate yearly progress, and as I mentioned before, we scored at or above the national average on standardized tests.

But we have to also recognize the fact that our students, the ones who have come back to us, as well as the ones who are displaced, they have been in two, three, four, five different schools this year as their families have had to move around. Their educational progress has really been impeded this year. They are very, very bright young people, and I know that they will make that up. But we possibly would need some type of a waiver this year, but I really feel that our kids are going to do well.

I think we are dealing with a lot of emotional issues as well with our students, and that further impedes their progress. So when you look at children, you have got to look from a very holistic point of view. Education is one thing; the way they feel about their safety is another major concern.

Our kids now are living in trailers and tents, and when this hurricane season comes this year, we have a strong wind, or we have threat, you know, our people are going to have to leave again. And we have hundreds if not thousands of trailers in our community which will pose a very serious threat. So our families are now living under that cloud at the moment.

And our kids may not be quite as focused on education this year as they could have been.

Mr. PAYNE. Also, what is the longest distance or amount of time that any of your older students who can drive, how long does it take the furthest person to get there?

Ms. VOITIER. Well, if they live in the parish, you know, we are picking them up on school buses that we have leased, because we had a fleet of 70 school buses, and when we evacuate citizens from our community, we did it through our school buses. And those are the only ones we saved. We lost most of our fleet.

But we also have youngsters who are living in the surrounding parishes who were driving in, because they wished to come back to us. We have some coming as far as Baton Rouge, which is 90 miles away one way. And they are making that trip in because they want to be back in their school.

Mr. PAYNE. I remember you saying that at our meeting there, and I just wanted it to be reflected on the record.

Just finally about your employees. You know, teachers' salaries are becoming more adequate, a lot better than when I was teach-

ing. It wasn't the reason they left, though. I just happened to get elected.

But how about some of the lower-paid employees? You know, I had the opportunity to sit with your food service workers, for example, you know. How are they making it? Many of them are, of course, their salaries are much lower. Many have to come long distances. Their salary remains the same. How are they making it?

Ms. VOITIER. It is very difficult all around at this point. Like I had mentioned before, it is almost a frontier town mentality. But we are all banding together. When they are coming long distances, we all know what is happening with the price of gasoline now, and that is further hurting us in the process of getting our teacher and our workers back. Those who have come back, if they are in St. Bernard Parish—remember, they are living in trailers, travel trailers as well as am I, in the parking lot of our school board administration building and in the parking lots of other school buildings that we have. It is a difficult situation.

Mr. PAYNE. Real quick. I know my time is up, but I just want to commend you for the great job that you have done.

And just ask Dr. Hughes, will Dillard be able to get back on its feet, in your opinion? I had the opportunity to go to southern on our trip, and we saw the temporary housing and temporary facilities. And I know it must have been a struggle for southern to be able to convince the state of Louisiana that they should have all that put back there. But how about Dillard? How do you stand in a nutshell?

Ms. HUGHES. Dillard University is engaged now in a massive, massive reconstruction project. That will have to be incremental. So we anticipate that in the fall, we will have some classroom space and some residential facilities so that our students can return and our faculty can teach.

A big problem we have now relates to residential facilities for students, faculty and staff. Many of our faculty who are teaching leave classes and go to the Gentile area and began reconstructing their homes. Many of our students lost homes through their families as well. And so we have got to identify some alternative residential space while we are reconstructing the campus.

Reconstruction of the full campus will take time and will take resources. But we plan to get back on campus in the fall, as I indicated, and in the process, we will continue to participate in that consortium that you heard me reference as a way of supplementing our needs.

We know that the needs are vast. I am not backing off on assuring that Dillard is going to return and that it will return as quickly as possible with the kind of strength perhaps that it has never had before. That is my commitment.

Mr. PAYNE. Well, let me thank all of you for the great job that you have all done. And the most difficult thing for me was when I returned home—and I was in the ninth ward, is it, a devastated ward. The most difficult thing was I couldn't explain to people what I saw. I mean, people were just dumbfounded. I mean, I didn't know where to start. It is just—it was just—none of us have ever seen anything like that before. And I just saw a person several days ago who just came back and indicated to me, and you know,

was the same thing with him. He said, I can't even explain to people how it is.

So our prayers are with you, and hopefully, the money will follow too.

Thank you.

Mr. BOUSTANY. At this time, I am pleased to recognize a member who is not part of this committee, but also certainly very concerned about what is happening in Louisiana, my colleague from Louisiana, Mr. Jefferson.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank Mr. Boustany and Mr. Jindal who serve on this committee for the work they have done for the people of our area.

I want to thank this committee for the attention it is paying today to this very, very vital part of our recovery. I want to thank those members who took the time and who are going to take the time to travel to our area to do what Mr. Payne has just described to see with their own eyes what is happening there and to try and come back and try and relate to the rest of the members what they have seen and to become advocates for us in this whole process.

When you get to the point where I am now where you have to enter the questioning period, almost everything that can be asked has been asked, but I want to just focus on three things, and I will ask them altogether and ask you to make some response.

Dr. Cowen and Dr. Hughes have talked about the difficulties of recruiting and retaining faculty and students for the upcoming year. And I want to know whether there are any specific incentives you think might be in order for the Congress to undertake to have a better chance to attract students, whether it means incentivising student tuition or some incentives for that or for faculty pay or for research or some other ways to think of some—if there are suggestions. You may not have them all today at the tip of your tongues, but perhaps you can provide us with that.

The second is with respect to the public schools, and I suppose also, but to a lesser extent, the sectarian school, the Catholic school. There is a great deal of concern you have already expressed about red tape and unreality connected to our FEMA's evaluating things and trying to make things whole.

But one of the things which we don't—we can't find any language for it under Stafford Act. For instance, you go on campuses looking at various buildings, and instead of treating it as an entire campus and going build by building inquiring of the insurance on each building at a certain level, and at the end of the day, the result is that they suppress their responsibilities so much until they actually end up with little responsibility if any. You may end up to the point where you actually—they may argue you owe them money before it is all said and done.

But they have actually taken the process and squeezing out of it every air of responsibility they can so they have less and less to do with helping us in the recovery as opposed to trying to find ways to do more and more to bring back what has been described as quite a devastated area. So I know in New Orleans they were telling me that going on a campus, they were taking each building one at a time, requiring project reports for each building, but worse than that, using deductibility standards for insurance requirements

for each building on the campus as opposed to the entire campus, therefore, reducing their responsibility.

And I would like to know about that. I haven't seen anything the Stafford Act that requires it, and I think this committee ought to take up that whole set of issues.

And on a strictly—if they are going to stay the law, then let us do this or the other, make sure they are talking about what the law really doesn't let them do as opposed to think that they are imagining. Just to say what they think—they are acting like insurance company is trying to save the company money. That is not what they ought to be doing here. They ought to be trying to comply with the law and give us the help we need to get the recovery done.

I will just—and the last thing is about the—and, Father Maestri, you can perhaps talk to this, about the mental health status of our student and our parents. We don't hear a whole lot about—I was mentioning it this morning, but this has got to be a crucial area. Students who are disconnected, parents who are removed from areas and lost, not only lost houses, but lost jobs and all those sorts of issues, and whether there is enough in the pipeline to help with that sort of—those types of questions.

I will leave it there and see if I can get a response from Dr. Cowen, Dr. Hughes, and then from the public education people, and then Father Maestri.

Thank you very much.

Mr. COWEN. Mr. Jefferson, I will respond to the question about incentives for student and faculty, because you know that is probably our most immediate challenge right now besides the cash know. How do we retain and attract students to New Orleans? How do we retain and attract faculty to New Orleans?

I think any kind of programs that we could get—grant programs, loan programs—that creates an incentive for those individuals to stay or to come would be extraordinarily helpful, because right now, our students have lots of options all over America. And anything we could do to provide those incentives through, as I said financial means, would be extraordinarily helpful.

The same thing with our faculty. The faculty is very key to our community, because they really are an important hub of intellectual capital. If we lose our faculty for any of our institutions, it is going to be extraordinarily difficult to replace them. And they are having a difficult time right now if the researchers getting replacements for the lab equipment, their research assets. So once again, availability of loan programs or grant programs would be immensely helpful.

Ms. HUGHES. Mr. Jefferson, I would opt for grant programs based on one experience that we had in January. In January, we were fortunate to have a donor who indicated that he wanted to demonstrate that he could bring students back to Dillard University with the right incentives. And so we started at a level of \$5,200 per student for scholarship, then moved down to \$2,000. That only took care of 200 students. But believe me, when the numbers started showing up differently, and we had put that information on the Web, the incentive was really there. And I am convinced that that is why we were able to bring back more students.

Our students are very loan heavy, of course, because so many of them are on financial aid. And as a matter of fact, about 95 or 97 percent are first-time students in college. So for us, grants would be really, really important.

With faculty, because of the kind of faculty we have recruited, and because they have been so carefully selected with their specialties, they are now being attracted out, because we have no incentive match funds. And so it is really important to me that I am able to, first of all, retain the good faculty that we have, because it is so expensive to recruit them, but also to reattract other faculty with competitive salaries. So those are very, very important.

In addition, housing. We need—even temporary housing would be wonderful, because, as you know, in Gentille, we don't have residential capacities yet.

Ms. VOITIER. From our perspective, in terms of keeping our faculties—I know it was basically a higher ed question, but K through 12, it is very real as well. Some of our best teachers have left our parish and are in the surrounding areas.

There has got to be a way for us to be able to offer incentives for at least to come back. But to come back means living in a FEMA trailer or a little travel trailer for a while unless we can give them additional compensation for that long drive back and forth. And we are trying to look at some of the restart money to see if that is an allowable use which we feel it is, but we are working through the details of that with our State Department of Ed from audit purposes in terms of paying additional monies as incentives to come back.

The mental health component that you mentioned is extremely critical. Earlier, I talked about a partnership we have with LSU working with Dr. Howard Osofsky, who is the head of the psychiatric department for LSU, who is assisting us with a great many members of his staff in working with our children along with our own counselors and social workers.

And we feel that that is going to have to be a fairly long-term relationship until these kids feel a sense of normalcy and a sense of safety, that they need a way to work through those feelings. They are going home each night to these trailers and listening to their parents talk about all the problems that they are having.

And there have been some issues in our community, family problems. Our suicide rate is up, to be perfectly honest. And the personal issues and problems they are experiencing are obviously spilling over to their children, and we are seeing that in our schools as well.

As far as FEMA, you are absolutely right. The amount of money in resources that are being spent in the assessment of our physical facilities as they do it on a building-by-building basis. You know, you talk about—and I have heard so many people talk about the hundreds of millions and billions of dollars that Congress is appropriating for this disaster. But I see very little of it actually getting down to the people who are suffering.

What is happening, it is being tied up in this mid-level bureaucracy as it goes through layer after layer of contractors and subcontractors. And the people who are hurting, the people who are in pain are not receiving those funds. And if anything comes out

of this, I would hope that you take a very hard look at where that money is going and who is benefiting from those funds, because the people day in and day out who have to live through this are seeing very little of these monies.

One of the questions I continually ask of our FEMA representatives: Is that statute or is that policy? If it is in statute, well, then, we have got a long road to get that changed. If it is a policy, then let us talk to the people who can change those policies. But you would be amazed that we can't get a straight answer, because the people on the ground, the ones that we are having direct contact with in many cases have been trained over a 2-week period, given a manual, and said, go out and do this.

So you cannot get—you get different answers each day, and depending on who you talk with. So there has got to be better and better consistency of the FEMA representatives on the ground.

Father MAESTRI. Representative Jefferson, the Archdiocese of New Orleans has developed a comprehensive pilot program to deal with, not only children, but also their families. And the program is called the Fleur de Lis Program. And it is done in association with Catholic Charities and also psychiatric mental health and family therapists at the University of North Carolina, and also other resources from around the country.

I believe that Dr. Rigamer, a well-respected psychiatrist and family therapist is the medical ground worker for this particular program, because we know that lousing economics and education are only part it. Children do not check trauma at the door. It is not something they take on and off like a coat, pick it up and go home. It is something that they live with. And very often, they are looking to adults who themselves are traumatized. And so this program, this 14-week program is for our principals, administrators and teachers, but it is not only directed to children and parents, it is also directed to school personnel themselves.

Many of our teachers have lost homes, have lost loved ones, have lost cars and a whole way of life that they no longer have. And so they are expected to not only teach, help process, but themselves help deal with this particular trauma. So this particular program, we believe, is very, very important.

Mr. JEFFERSON. Father Maestri, this is all being done through privately raised funds now?

Father MAESTRI. That is correct.

And, you know, it was interesting that, you know, we hear so much about, you know, the hoops of bureaucracy. Well, we find ourselves through the hoops of bureaucracy, but we also find ourselves, to a large extent, having to do a lot of this buy ourselves in the sense that I think that there needs to be a greater inclusiveness in the sense that the waters and wind did not discriminate between public and private.

And so while we want to do all of those things necessary to meet regulations, et cetera, we think that there is a real opportunity for greater inclusiveness of private entities within this helping situation.

Mr. JEFFERSON. I want to say just one last thing. We often hear a lot from Members of the Congress about how we aren't doing enough back home to help ourselves. And I think we have seen

from this panel today that the people have taken a great deal of initiative throughout this whole process to do things for ourselves that the government isn't filling the gap for.

I hope that the members are taking note of that.

Mr. PAYNE. Would you yield for a moment?

Mr. JEFFERSON. I don't have any time at all. I will yield what time I don't have.

Mr. PAYNE. All right. I just want to say that I think that this incentive is really something. We have done it in the history of our country. When we wanted people out West, we had the Homestead Act. And we just had a round and put a stake in the ground. You got the land, and you just had to stay there. We have had the Tennessee Valley authority when there was nothing happening in that area. We had universal access for telephones. They were subsidized by short lines up in the northeast so that people in rural areas could get it for the same cost.

We have seen the E-Rate that we use for our poor schools where it is subsidized by the rate. We have seen rural doctors have loan forgiveness if doctors are going to rural areas. There are all kinds of examples of the thing that Congressman Jefferson mentioned, and I think we simply have to get creative and just look at what has happened in the past. It is not even new. It is just tweaking a bit.

Thank you. Thank you for yielding to me, sir.

Mr. BOUSTANY. Well, I just want to say—first of all, I commend each of you for your dedication, your leadership, your creativity and your professionalism and how you have handled yourselves through a really devastating period of time.

I also want to thank you for a very thorough testimony and forthright answers to the questions. You have been very thorough in answering all the questions, and I think most of the questions that this committee has. Let me just say that, you know, in the immediate days following both storms, this committee working closely with myself and Mr. Jindal, did everything we could to try to get aid down to the school systems as expeditiously as possible.

We tried to assess the damage as quickly as possible, get information, move it through the committee. And I was very proud of the committee and how we handled things and worked through trying to provide financial assistance to higher ed and K through 12. Yet things remain very much mired in bureaucracy, as was so beautifully pointed out by Ms. Voitier in her final statement there.

And I have recognized—I was on the ground last week in Louisiana. I went and stopped in Johnson's Bayou, and it was very distressing, first of all, to see the state of the school, and also to find out that not a single penny of Federal aid had reached the school system. That is a problem.

It is also a problem when I pick up the "Baton Rouge Morning Advocate" and read a headline that says, "East Baton Rouge Schools Await Hurricane Funds." And now, we are 8 months out beyond the storm, and so much of this aid has been locked up at the state level.

So I would say to you that I am proud that Congress was able to go through the appropriations process and appropriate money, but yet our job is not done because we need to provide the over-

sight to see that the money is actually getting into the hands of those who need it.

So with that having been said, I am not going to ask any questions. You have been very, very thorough both in testimony and in your answers. So again, I am going to just close out by saying thank you very much for what you have done. I am very proud to be associated with each of you and the work you have done, and so again, I thank you on behalf of the committee.

Before I close out, though, I just want to also submit a letter for the record that I received from the American Library Association. And I want to acknowledge the devastation that libraries also suffered in addition to the schools as a result of both these storms.

And I think it is important to emphasize the role that libraries play in education, and I commend the American Library Association for convening their annual meeting in New Orleans this summer, and I look forward to welcoming their 20,000-plus attendees to Louisiana. It is certainly going to be good for our community.

So again, on behalf of the committee, I thank you very much for coming here and testifying and providing some very important answers to questions that we have had.

And with that, we will adjourn this committee hearing.

[Whereupon, at 12:35 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

[Additional materials submitted for the record:]

#### **Prepared Statement of the American Occupational Therapy Association**

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) submits this statement for the record of the April 26, 2006 hearing. We appreciate the opportunity to provide this information regarding the involvement of occupational therapy in Gulf Coast recovery efforts, particularly in education. It is critical for Congress to be aware of issues regarding America's public health and education needs so that it can develop appropriate national policies to meet society's needs. This topic is critical to the development of a clearer understanding of how states and local school districts in Hurricane-affected areas have responded to the challenge of meeting children's learning needs.

The American Occupational Therapy Association represents more than 35,000 occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, and students of occupational therapy. AOTA members work with children and adults whose lives have been affected or could be affected by injury, disease, disability, or other health risk. Clients who benefit from occupational therapy include infants and children, working age adults, and older persons who are dealing with conditions affecting their ability to engage in everyday activities or "occupations."

#### *Why Occupational Therapists Are Concerned About Gulf Coast Recovery Efforts*

Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent flooding caused by the failure of the New Orleans levee system resulted in one of the largest natural disasters to hit the U.S. Occupational therapy practitioners and students were among the multitude of people forced to leave their homes and communities and move to a different city or state. AOTA members, schools and universities, and communities across the country opened their doors to those displaced by the storm. AOTA quickly mobilized in support of relief efforts, including the establishment of a section on the AOTA website (<http://www.aota.org/nonmembers/area1/links/link06a.asp>) that provided information and resources to help members cope with disaster and to identify ways to help. The occupational therapy community also provided crisis intervention, donated clothing, supplies, and money, helped with the clean-up, and helping children and families integrate into new schools and new communities.

More than one-third of AOTA members work with children in schools, preschools, and early intervention settings. They provide critical services for children to improve their ability to perform daily activities or occupations necessary to function more effectively at home, school, or in the community. Of the estimated 370,000 students who were displaced from their home schools in Louisiana and Mississippi, approximately 10-12 percent have disabilities and had been receiving special education and related services, such as occupational therapy, under the Individuals with Dis-

abilities Education Act (IDEA) prior to the hurricane. In the aftermath of the storm, occupational therapists are on the front lines helping schools develop appropriate programming for displaced students, especially those with disabilities.

#### *How Occupational Therapy Helps in Disaster Recovery*

The goal of occupational therapy is to facilitate engagement in occupation in order to support participation in valued life roles and activities and to enhance the quality of life. In disaster situations, occupational therapists focus on adaptive disaster recovery and resumption of valued life roles and activities, by identifying disruptions in clients' previously adaptive occupational performance patterns and help clients develop new effective patterns of performance.

In working with individuals and communities affected by disasters, occupational therapy practitioners bring a set of core skills founded on the importance of occupational engagement. Working together with the client, occupational therapy practitioners plan and implement interventions that enable people to reestablish balance in daily life in activities of daily living, work, leisure, and social participation by

- analyzing activities to determine the underlying requisites for effective performance,
- evaluating functional abilities in relation to specific activities, tasks, and occupations, and
- configuring physical and psychological environments to maximize function and social integration.

Occupational therapy is based on the premise that engagement in occupations facilitates adaptation. Occupation can help disaster survivors reestablish their lost sense of control. Focused, constructive activity, such as helping others, moves people beyond shock and denial. This strategy is especially effective for survivors whose lives have been disrupted. By focusing on occupations that help such people take charge of their life, occupational therapy practitioners can help them regain their sense of mastery and overcome any sense of guilt from a perceived failure to prepare for the disaster or to protect their family. By engaging in play, vigorous physical activity, or valued leisure occupations, survivors can get a brief respite from recurring thoughts, worries, and concerns about the future.

This use of occupation is illustrated by the C'est La Vie Tile Project of the "OT Gulf Support" team. Occupational therapy practitioners and students developed a therapeutic mirror collage activity for homeowners in Louisiana. Using pieces from their broken china, therapists helped make framed mirrors for the homeowners. The frame around each mirror contained pieces of the broken china. The homeowners recognized the importance of the activity as a bridge for moving from the past into the future, in a way that also provides a connection to possessions that were important in the family's life.

Both for short-term, "normal" stress reactions and those that persist over time, occupational therapists can provide supportive, informative, and educational counseling, as well as crisis intervention to help survivors deal with the consequences of their experience. While occupational therapists use counseling skills every day in practice, occupational therapy is a three-way relationship consisting of the client, the therapist, and the activity. Without the use of activity, occupational therapy does not occur. This differentiates occupational therapy from other mental health approaches.

Occupation and activity can help clients cope with traumatic stress and meet survival needs. Occupational engagement provides diversion from stressful events and helps reestablish a sense of mastery in a situation in which a person feels a loss of control. Participation in occupation facilitates restoration of adaptive habits, supports a person's sense of identity, and helps establish a spiritual connection in the disaster situation.

As part of the intervention team, occupational therapists can help clients develop coping skills to deal with the aftereffects of their experience. Additionally, through engagement in occupation, disaster survivors can restructure their habits and routines to cope more effectively with stress and anxiety, to enhance their sense of mastery over their environment, and to participate in their valued life roles.

#### *How Occupational Therapy Helps Address Children's Mental Health Needs*

Recent reports have indicated that mental health problems are prominent for both children and adults following the hurricane. In one study, nearly half of the parents surveyed reported that their child showed new emotional or behavioral problems which emerged after the hurricane. Children, whose mothers scored at a level consistent with a psychiatric diagnosis on a standard mental health screening instrument, were two and a half times more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems since the hurricane.

In addition, frequent relocation of families has made it difficult for some children to develop or sustain new relationships in school and have undermined the family's ability to establish a predictable routine to help their children cope better. It is clear that the need for health and mental health professionals is significant.

With its roots in mental health, occupational therapy is concerned about an individual's ability to perform everyday occupations, so that they can participate in school, at home, at work, and in the community. Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants provide critical services to and for children and youth in a variety of early childhood, educational and community settings who have a variety of learning, educational, and behavioral needs, including children with mental health need and those at risk for suicide. Occupational therapy practitioners help children and youth bridge the gap between their capacity to learn and full, successful participation in education, work, play, and leisure activities.

Occupational therapists look at the individual's strengths and needs with respect to daily life performance in school, home and community life. Focus is placed on the relationship between the client and their performance abilities, the demands of the activity, and the physical and social contexts within which the activity is performed. In addition, each individual's occupational performance is viewed through a psychological-social-emotional lens. This perspective helps the occupational therapist to understand what is important and meaningful to the child as well as how their past roles, experiences, strengths and patterns of coping work together to shed light on current issues and problems.

Occupational therapy intervention for children and youth emphasizes functional and readiness skills and behaviors, and includes consultation with parents and families, teachers and other professionals. Services are directed toward achieving desired outcomes that were developed in collaboration with the family and other professionals.

In early childhood and education-settings, occupational therapists identify the underlying performance skills, including motor, process, communication and interaction skills that impede the child's ability to participate in learning and school-related activities. Intervention strategies and service models are designed to support desired developmental and educational outcomes, and may be provided individually or in small groups. The therapist also works with teachers and the child's family to determine how to modify home or classroom routines, schedules and environments to provide structured learning opportunities and experiences to support the child's emerging skills.

#### *Why Occupational Therapy?*

Occupational therapy for children/youth with mental health problems uses activity-based interventions that serve as the vehicle for enhanced self-understanding, provide a reality-based structure, and supports skill acquisition or enhancement. Services focus on mobilizing both internal and external resources that support the child's self-understanding within the context of a safe, caring relationship. Intervention strategies address interpersonal communication and other social behaviors. Strategies include helping the child learn to manage and organize their behavior and classroom work space and environment, and to complete assigned tasks or chores. Intervention may also address underlying sensory-motor concerns that affect the child's active participation in home and school activities.

Occupational therapy is an underutilized service that can meet and address the mental health needs of children and youth in schools and the community. Services for school-aged children are intended to help them succeed in school. Intervention strategies may focus on improving the child's information-processing ability, academic skill development, and ability to function in the school environment. For adolescents, occupational therapy focuses on preparation for work life choices, improvement of social and work skills, and learning how to create or adapt the environment to maximize productivity.

Many children and youth who could benefit from occupational therapy do not receive services, particularly those with mental health needs. This limited access affects young children and students receiving special education under the IDEA as well as students in general education. Often this limitation is due to a lack of understanding about how occupational therapy can help or because of perceptions that therapists only address "motor" issues. Occupational therapy training is comprehensive and covers physical, psychological, social and pedagogical aspects of human occupation. Occupational therapy's understanding of human performance, or "do-ing," can be invaluable in helping parents and other professional staff to understand the relationship between the physical and psychosocial and how these factors support or impede children's progress.

*What is Occupational Therapy?*

Occupational therapy is a vital health care service, designed to help individuals participate in important every day occupations. Occupational therapy services address underlying performance skills, including motor, process, communication and interaction skills to assist in the correction and prevention of conditions that limit an individual from fully participating in life. For children with developmental, learning and other educational needs, occupational therapy can help them to develop needed skills within the context of important learning experiences and to perform necessary daily activities such as feeding or dressing themselves and help them get along with their peers at school. Occupational therapy services can help identify strategies for teachers and families to use to facilitate appropriate reading and writing development.

Occupational therapy practitioners have the unique training to assist individuals to engage in daily life activities throughout the lifespan and across home, school, work and play environments. Services may be provided during only one period of the child's life or at several different points when the child is having difficulties engaging in his or her daily life or school occupations, such as when they are faced with more complex demands in the classroom resulting from increased emphasis and reliance on written output. Occupational therapy services may be provided in the family's home, at school, and in the community, including day care and preschool programs, private clinics, and vocational programs.

Occupational therapy is a health and rehabilitation service covered by private health insurance, Medicare, Medicaid, workers' compensation, vocational programs, behavioral health programs, early intervention programs, and education programs. We thank you once again for the opportunity to submit our comments for the record.

Hurricane Katrina revealed longstanding problems that continue to afflict many of our nation's cities and states, especially their poorest communities. As the recovery and rebuilding from Katrina progresses, Congress has the opportunity to address underlying problems that pre-dated the hurricane and undermine the health and well-being of the nation's children. AOTA is ready to work with Congress to help meet this need.

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[Additional material supplied by Dr. Cowen follows:]

**Rebuilding and Transforming: A Plan for Public Education in New Orleans  
A School System in Crisis**

Prior to Katrina, the Orleans Parish public school system—with over 60,000 students—was the 49th largest school district in the United States. It ranked among the lowest performing of all large, urban school districts and was facing significant financial problems. Hurricane Katrina caused enormous physical devastation to schools that were already in poor condition. Even more damaging was interruption to thousands of children's education and the scattering of New Orleans families, teachers and principals.

*Transforming Crisis into Opportunity*

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, Orleans Parish has the opportunity to build a new school system to meet the needs and interests of all its students. Now more

than ever before, New Orleanians are united in their determination to work toward providing first-rate schools for all children. Mayor Ray Nagin appointed the Bring New Orleans Back Education Committee to develop a long term plan for re-building the public education system that would be bold, courageous and transformative.

## *A New Vision for Public Education in New Orleans*

We can and must set ambitious goals and become a model for large urban school districts throughout the country. As a starting point, the Education Committee developed the following long-term vision for public education in New Orleans: deliver learning and achievement for all students, regardless of race, socioeconomic class or where they live in New Orleans with the goal of graduating all students ready for college and the workplace.

## *A Rigorous, Transparent and Inclusive Process*

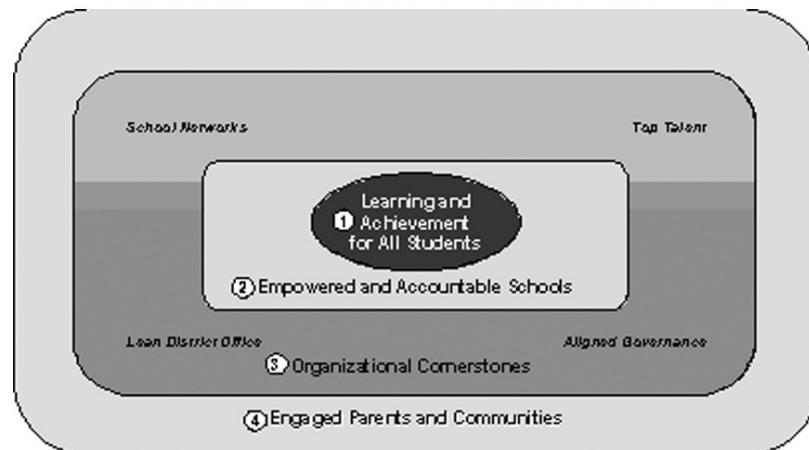
To craft this transformational plan for New Orleans Public Schools, we committed to a fact-based process that would enable all members of the community to participate and stay informed. The Education Committee reviewed the results of a diagnosis of the financial condition, physical condition and academic performance of New Orleans' schools both before Katrina and currently. The Committee heard from more than 1,500 New Orleanians, including principals, teachers, parents, and students presently scattered across the U.S., about their needs and hopes for the schools. In addition, the committee reviewed best practices from around the country and the world. We brought together leaders who have successfully reformed educational systems, and heard from the best researchers and thinkers on education. Taken together, the current situation, the desires of New Orleanians, and the best practices led to the development of the key design principles and in turn to the model laid out in this report.

## *A Bold New Education System*

The synthesis of the research, outreach and feedback led to a set of key design principles that guided the development of the final plan. These principles include, among others, superior standards, accountability, and top talent at every level. Building on these core principles, the Education Committee is proposing a bold new public education system, the Educational Network Model.

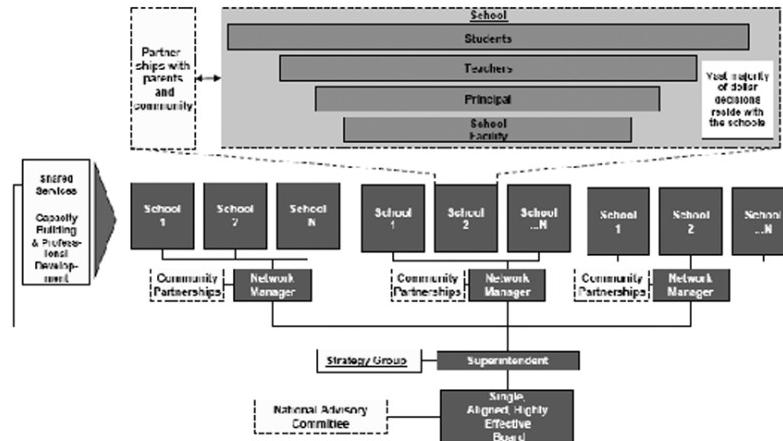
The Educational Network Model we propose is a new vision designed with the sole mission of enabling and ensuring achievement for all students. The model empowers schools and holds stakeholders accountable for student achievement, from the board to teachers. In the model, there are small networks of charter, contract, and system-run schools. The system center is lean and strategic in the way it designs and manages school networks. The system center sets district-wide strategy and provides support systems for the schools.

The Educational Network Model is supported by four organizational cornerstones: school networks, top talent at all levels, a lean district office, and aligned governance. The following diagram illustrates the full Educational Network Model.



The structure of the Educational Network model is markedly different from a traditional school system. It is based on empowerment, flexibility, and accountability. The organizational diagram found below details how the new model would be structured.

tured. Rather than having all schools report to a single central district, this system is made up of a set of educational networks. Each educational network will eventually consist of a group of 8-15 schools. The schools in each network will have similar characteristics, so that they can benefit from sharing each others' experience and resources.



#### *Key Recommendations*

In order to achieve the goals of the new Educational Network Model, there are a number of key actions that the committee recommends. Each recommendation is associated with one of the four foundational principles of the model.

Deliver learning and achievement for all students, regardless of race, socio-economic class or where they live in New Orleans with the goal of graduating all students ready for college and the workplace

1. Design and implement a universal early education program based on best practices for early childhood
2. Define explicit, detailed and rigorous instructional standards by grade and subject that are aligned with student achievement and college/workforce readiness objectives
3. Support schools to best meet the needs of their students who have exceptional needs, including special education
4. Ensure safe school environments through effective discipline policies and safe, secure facilities
5. Provide before and after school programs to enrich student learning
6. Ensure that schools are equipped to address student's emotional and psychological well being, especially with respect to trauma resulting from Hurricane Katrina
7. Design school facilities to support student achievement
8. Ensure teacher to student ratios are consistent with the learning needs of students and best practice
9. Provide all students with the ability to choose a school that best meets their needs
10. Create a fair, rules-based system for placing students in their school of choice
11. Allocate resources to schools using an equitable funding model where dollars follow students with appropriate weighted adjustments based on the educational needs of the student population at each school
12. Develop a new school-focused philosophy that empowers schools as the centerpiece for transformation and holds them accountable for student performance
13. Empower schools by shifting primary budgetary control and decision-making authority to the principals. Train principals to handle this new authority and hold them accountable for delivering school results.
14. Give principals the authority to select and retain the staff that best supports the vision for their school.

- 14. Hold networks, schools and teachers accountable for student learning and achievement using transparent, multiple data-driven measurement and assessment systems
- 15. Align assessment systems with Louisiana and national norms, as well as college admission standards
- 16. Design a comprehensive scorecard to assess school and network performance and make scorecard results publicly available
- 17. Align compensation with performance at all levels
  - Create a new Educational Network Model, with that provides flexibility, options and accountability in order to drive student learning and achievement.
- 18. Design and build multiple networks of schools, grouping “like” schools together to facilitate coordination and best practice sharing. There are multiple ‘themes’ to organize networks around, e.g., neighborhoods and type of schools. In addition, there are multiple ways to manage networks, e.g., chartered, contract managed and district-run.
- 19. Hire and retain a world-class superintendent
- 20. Attract, develop and retain the best leadership team, network managers and principals
- 21. Create a Skill Building / Professional Development organization that is tightly aligned with student needs and school achievement goals.
- 22. Form a small leadership group at the district level focused on a core set of strategic and coordinating functions (e.g. academic standards, data analysis).
- 23. Create a Shared Services Organization that delivers high quality and efficient service options and treats schools as customers.
- 24. Create a single, aligned and highly effective governing board with the stability and collective skill set to ensure transformation occurs.
- 25. Focus efforts of governing board on driving transformation and ensuring accountability, not on operating schools.
- 26. Create a national advisory board, comprised of educational transformation leaders, to serve as trusted advisors over next 5 to 10 years
  - Develop new partnerships to engage parents and the community to support student learning
  - 27. Empower schools with authority and resources to design partnering strategies that best meet their students needs
  - 28. Provide support to schools’ partnering efforts through network managers
  - 29. Assign clear roles and responsibilities to parents, e.g., parents required to pledge involvement in their children’s education
  - 30. Develop innovative outreach approaches to communicate with and engage parents
  - 31. Partner with organizations to offer family literacy and other programs that empower parents to better help their children
  - 32. Encourage co-location of community facilities with schools (e.g., libraries, recreation facilities, health and social services)
  - 33. Partner with key community groups to offer programs that will support student needs and enrich their learning, e.g. social service organizations, post secondary education institutions, faith-based, and arts and cultural organizations

#### *Looking Forward*

Any effective education plan must also account for the current reality in New Orleans. The number of students and teachers returning to the school system in the near term will be limited. The school district faces significant debt and there are multiple systems of governance to deal with. To be successful, any education plan must be flexible yet robust enough to meet these unique challenges. For instance, uncertainty about the size of the returning student population may mean that it would not be economically viable to establish a large central office running a traditional school system. On the other hand, uncertainty about the number of available teachers calls into question the efficacy of an all-charter model. Present circumstances reinforce the appropriateness of the educational network model to respond most effectively to the current situation.

This plan represents a material departure from the way New Orleans’ school system has functioned in the past. Adopting this plan will take significant courage, resolve, and a great deal of hard work on the part of our community and our leaders. But we are convinced that it holds the best and brightest hope for our children. Implementation of the Educational Network model will fundamentally transform the look and feel of New Orleans Public Schools.

[Internet URL to Communities In Schools' March 2006 Publication, "Inside CIS" follows:]

*<http://www.cisnet.org/library/download.asp?file=insideCIS—2006—03.pdf>*

